

Her 6.5 percent downward departure rate is below the national average of 10.3 percent, and well below the Second Circuit average of 15.2 percent. Her upward departure rate of 2.7 percent is three times the national average of 0.9 percent.

Mr. President, we have before us a candidate who embodies all of the finest qualities we could possibly ask for in a Federal judge. She is brilliant, principled and thoughtful. I can see no reason to prolong the process that will lead to her confirmation any further. Surely the time has come for us to act.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

Mr. BREAUX addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

MEDICARE COMMISSION FIELD HEARINGS

Mr. BREAUX. Mr. President, I take this time on the floor to inform my colleagues, and others who may have an interest in the fact, that the Medicare Commission will be having a field hearing on Monday coming outside of Washington in Minneapolis, MN.

As always, it is the intention of myself as chairman of the Medicare Commission, along with my colleague from the House, BILL THOMAS, and all of the commission members, that we need to get as much information from outside of Washington about the Medicare problem as we possibly can.

This effort in bringing the commission to the city of Minneapolis, MN, on Monday for a rather very, very full agenda of activities in Minneapolis relating to Medicare is to give all of us an opportunity to gather information, which will be extremely important in helping us make the very difficult but extremely important recommendations that we are required by Congress to make to the President, and also to the Congress by March 1st of this coming year.

Our hearing will consist of a site visit in the morning where commissioners will choose from one of four sites, three of which will have the direct interaction with Medicare beneficiaries. I would like to cover some of the sites that we will be visiting so people will know exactly what this commission is going to be doing.

We will have a chance to visit the Wilder Senior Services Clinic, which is a Minnesota Senior Health Options Clinic, which is really a demonstration program now being run by the Minnesota Department of Human Services. It serves seniors who find themselves in the unique position of being eligible for Medicare, and also being eligible for Medicaid at the same time. These people are so-called dual beneficiaries who can get their health coverage from two separate programs. And how this particular operation is handling it is something that I think we can benefit from seeing.

The second site visit that we are going to take the commission to is a

Fairview University Medicare Center, the Mayo Clinic, the world famous medical institution in Minneapolis, where our commissioners will have the opportunity to really tour an integrated care clinical site and observe telemedicine demonstrations with the Mayo Clinic in a rural facility outside of the city, and also a visit with providers and beneficiaries and also administrators.

Third, the commissioners will be able to also visit Medtronic, which develops and manufactures medical devices to treat cardiovascular and neurological disorders.

The idea is to tour these facilities to look at the impact that new technology, of which the United States is a world leader in producing, has on the future of Medicare.

Clearly, as we are able to produce more sophisticated equipment facilities to treat health care beneficiaries in this country, it is going to have a direct effect on the Medicare Program, and hopefully for the better.

The final site visit opportunity we will be taking is the United Health Care Research Center, an Institute for Health Care Quality, where we will tour their facilities and learn about how United Health Care gathers and analyzes patient data to evaluate medical outcomes and cost-effectiveness as a treatment.

It is very important that we study how various forms of health care affect outcomes, both from a health standpoint, as well as from a cost standpoint.

Then, beginning at noon at the Minneapolis Convention Center, our commissioners will then hear from people who will make presentations to our committee in the form of three panels.

The first panel we will hear from is the Buyers Health Care Action Group, which is interestingly a coalition of 27 large, Twin-Cities-based self-insured employers—companies like 3M, General Mills, and Honeywell.

This panel hopefully will give the commission an opportunity to hear from private companies regarding how they purchase health care for their employees and what the result has been for their employees, as well as what the results have been for their companies.

The second panel will be a panel of managed care plans to talk about their experience in the managed care market in Minneapolis, which has had managed care around longer than most places in the country.

With the debate on Medicare both in the Congress and in the public in general I think it is important that we look at some of them and try to understand better how they are working in providing quality health care and reduced costs for Medicare beneficiaries.

The third and last panel we will hear from is current and future beneficiaries on information that they need and use in making health care decisions. It is really important with the new proposal

coming out of the Health Care Financing Authority, HCFA, coming October 1st. Medicare is not going to be like it used to be. People who are Medicare beneficiaries are going to get some choice options. They are going to have different decisions to make about whether they want to go into managed care.

It is very important for seniors and their families to understand that grandma, grandpa, mom, dad, and others are going to have to make some different decisions about their health care. While this can be a little bit frightening, I think we should look upon it as a real opportunity to give them more choice and ultimately better services than they currently get under Medicare.

We can be very proud of what Medicare has done. Medicare is not that great a plan in the 1990s. It doesn't provide eyeglass coverage; it doesn't provide prescription drugs; it doesn't provide long-term health care. Most beneficiaries think it is a wonderful program, and, indeed, it is. But it is not nearly as good as most health plans in the country today that are private plans which provide generally a lot more benefits to the beneficiaries than Medicare does.

So we are going to be looking at how people get their information and what information they need in order to make these choices.

The rest of the afternoon is going to be devoted to public interest, to really have the commission sit and listen to Mr. and Mrs. America and tell us what they would like to see in Medicare for the future.

We have 2 hours set aside for audience participation. We call this session a "Call for Solutions" where we have invited ordinary citizens from the Minnesota region and area to submit their ideas and recommendations for improving Medicare.

In addition to the field hearing that we will be having in Minneapolis, we will also be continuing to explore other ways to get input from the public. We don't have to visit every city and every State and every county in America to hear from America. In this century, as we move to the 21st century, we are going to be making use of teleconferencing, video conferencing. Commission meetings that we have had so far have been covered in full by C-SPAN. We have a national web site. We have had 13 commission and task force meetings since March 6th, all of which have been open to the public for their information.

I think we have a very ambitious schedule, as I have just outlined, for the Monday field hearings in Minneapolis.

I urge my colleagues to continue to be mindful of what we are attempting to do. If they have suggestions, we are open to receiving those suggestions. Hopefully, we will have their participation as we draft recommendations for the full Congress and for the President,

so we can make the reforms necessary to preserve, protect, and even, indeed, improve Medicare for future generations.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor and make a point of order a quorum is not present.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

VERBAL LITTER

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, much has been said about the so-called "lost art" of writing. The ubiquity of telephones and, more recently, electronic mail, or "cyber-chat," as well as the acceptability of alternative presentations in lieu of written essays in schools, can all be cited as contributors to the growing inability of many people to compose and edit well-organized and effective written documents. E-mail, which is daily becoming more and more common, a common method for communicating, is an easy, instant way to get a message out, but the very quickness of the transmit inhibits the kind of thoughtful consideration of the message and care in editing that are the hallmarks of good letters and great literature.

Someone has said that letters are our personal ambassadors. We politicians need to be very much aware of that. Letters are our personal ambassadors. And the trend toward relying more and more exclusively on e-mail means that the future's historical archives will become littered with broken sentence fragments, incomplete thoughts, and embarrassingly ignorant spelling. Think about it. Mr. President, can you imagine the Federalist essays by Jay, Madison, and Hamilton—can you imagine those Federalist essays, had they been typed in such a stream-of-consciousness manner and then spewed across the fiber optic web the way some messages are nowadays?

I am sure that Hamilton, Madison, and Jay, the authors of the Federalist Papers, did not speak as cogently and fluidly as they wrote. Perhaps nobody does, or very few persons do. But they were no slouches at the speaker's rostrum. I doubt that they would have been very good on television. I have thought about that a good many times, and wondered how Daniel Webster or Henry Clay or John C. Calhoun would have come across on television. How would they do on 20-second sound bites? They would do as poorly as ROBERT C. BYRD, I would anticipate.

As Francis Bacon observed, "Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man." Think about that also. That is very true. "Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an

exact man." And so we write more exactly than we speak.

These Founding Fathers were certainly well read and they were good writers and, therefore, very knowledgeable and exact, precise, weighing every word.

When we speak of infrastructure, such as reservoirs and dams, we talk about the Army engineers. When we seek their recommendations about a particular dam or reservoir, they will give us advice, and it will reflect the B-C ratio, the benefit-cost ratio. Anything that is recommended by the Army engineers would have to have at least \$1 in benefits for every \$1 in costs. That is the benefit-cost ratio.

Therefore, in speaking of the Founding Fathers, which is a term that needs to be examined—"Founding Fathers"—and especially those who wrote the Federalist essays, I think in terms of the benefit-cost ratio. They made every word count. Every word carried its full weight. It had a proper place in the construction of the essay. It wasn't used lightly. It was used thoughtfully. So there was the B-C ratio.

Well, that is just a little idea of mine. But these men were knowledgeable, they were exact, and their writing was enhanced by their thoughtfulness, and, in turn, their speaking ability was enhanced by their writing, especially in the case of Daniel Webster.

When Webster made a speech, when he spoke on January 26 and January 27, 1830, in his debate with Hayne—schoolboys all across the Nation, it used to be, were required to memorize some of Webster's speeches. I don't guess they are required to memorize those speeches anymore. As a matter of fact, memorization is not looked upon as being very beneficial or helpful in some schools, I suppose. Times have changed.

But Webster was a good writer, and he memorized the speeches, many of them. Then he took them home, took them to his boarding house near the Capitol Building, and kept them for a few days, edited them, changed them, for the purposes of publication. Therefore, they were not exactly the speeches that we schoolboys memorized, they were not the exact speeches that Webster gave before the Senate. They were improved upon, just as we edit our own speeches. But we don't take them home. We don't take them to our boarding houses and keep them out several days. We edit them the same day. Many Senators probably have their staffs edit their remarks. But Webster, in doing so, had in mind exactly what Bacon referred to: "Writing maketh an exact man."

I said that the term "Founding Fathers" needed a little examination. Who were the Founding Fathers? Were they the signers of the Declaration of Independence? Were they the Framers of the Constitution? Were they the Framers of the first American Constitution, the Constitution under the Articles of Confederation? Were they

the signers of the second Constitution, the Constitution of 1787?

In those days, women did not participate in the conventions—but would the Founding Fathers also not include those individuals who met in the various State conventions to ratify the Constitution? Would they not include the writers of the Declaration of Independence? Would they not include the Members of the Congress under the Articles of Confederation? They surely debated much that went into the second Constitution. Would they not include the legislatures of the States that then existed?

So when we talk about the Founding Fathers, many people associate that term only with the framers of the second American Constitution. And certainly the framers were Founding Fathers, but not all the Founding Fathers, I am saying, not all the Founding Fathers were framers of the Constitution. So there is a little difference. It isn't a serious matter by any means, and I am not taking issue with anyone, but I have thought about that term.

It is hard to imagine that their spoken words could possibly be undercut by any of the all too common fillers that plague common conversation today, those "ums" and "uhs" and "likes," and especially that inanity of inanities, "you know." That is the most useless phrase. That is pure deadwood. It doesn't carry its weight in a speech, "you know."

Any time one turns on a television—which I don't do very often; perhaps that is why I have a lot of old ideas—he will hear a string of "you knows" from the anchormen and women, "you know."

What does it mean, "you know"? What do I know? You know? That is taking advantage of the other person when you say, "You know." "You know." How silly, how useless a phrase. That certainly would not carry its weight under the B-C ratio—the benefit-cost ratio—that inanity of inanities; that inanity of inanities, "you know."

Oh, how I hate that pernicious phrase, "you know." This is simply a filler. The tongue is operating in overdrive and the brain is somewhat behind the tongue, "you know."

We are told by Plutarch that—well, I am providing a rather good example of what Plutarch was saying. He said that Alcibiades was the greatest orator of his time.

Plutarch wrote that Demosthenes said that Alcibiades was the greatest speaker of his time and that when he came to a place in his oration and was having difficulty remembering the exact word, he paused—he paused—he simply paused until the right word came. He did not fill the gap with "you knows" or "ahs," "uhs," or "ums," and so on. He simply waited until the right word came.

Try it sometime. Record your own remarks. See if you are using that