constituents, who hope everyday that we, as their stewards of the budget, will make the right decisions for them that allows this nation to remain healthy and safe.

MEDICARE HOME HEALTH AND VETERANS HEALTH CARE IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1998

SPEECH OF

HON. ROBERT A. WEYGAND

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 9, 1998

Mr. WEYGAND. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to express my support for this legislation which provides some measure of relief to certain home health care agencies in my state. I want to thank my colleagues, Mr. MCGOVERN,1 Mr. COBURN, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. STARK and others who have worked hard on this issue with me since last year.

Last May, I sponsored an amendment to the Budget Resolution which was the first legislative action taken on IPS reform during the 105th Congress. This amendment, which passed unanimously, was significant because it called upon this Congress to take active steps to restore fairness and equity to the IPS. It called upon Congress to examine the effects of the IPS on low cost agencies and stressed the importance of accomplishing reform before the 105th Congress adjourned. I am pleased that Congress has addressed this issue and hope we can pass something which will be signed by the president soon.

Although this legislation before us today does not provide the amount of financial assistance that I believe is necessary, I believe it represents a first step to restoring some of the unfair and inequitable cuts enacted by the Balanced Budget Act.

The home health care provisions within this bill will help some home health care agencies, particularly those in my home state operating below the national average. By providing fifty-percent of the difference between an agency's current per beneficiary limit and the national average, Medicare will provide some additional reimbursement to many agencies in my state.

The legislation also permits home health care agencies operating above the national average to continue receiving the reimbursement they currently receive. Although some of these high cost agencies may be deserving of higher reimbursement, I have concerns that this payment policy continues to provide rewards to home health care agencies which were not frugal prior to the passage of the Balanced Budget Act, and effectively continues to penalize agencies which worked tirelessly to contain their costs. This is due, in part, to the large reliance to agency-specific data, as mandated by the Balanced Budget Act. I had wished that the resolution to this issue would have better addressed this situation and created a more level playing field, and home that with ongoing communications with the Senate and the Administration, we can work to further refine this measure to restore more equity into the home health care system.

I am disappointed that this legislation does not provide relief retroactively to home health care agencies. As you are aware, the Balanced Budget Act subjected home health care agencies to per beneficiary limits for cost reporting periods beginning on or after October 1, 1997. Some home health care agencies throughout the nation have been operating with low per beneficiary limits during their current cost reporting periods and need assistance now. While this legislation will provide much needed relief to some home health care agencies for cost reporting periods beginning during or after fiscal year 1999, it will not provide immediate relief to many deserving home health care agencies.

While I am pleased we have reached this point and will support this bill, there remains a great deal to be done. With the passage of the Balanced Budget Act, Congress mandated an additional fifteen percent cut in home health care if the new payment system is not fully implemented. The administration signaled in August that the new system will not be ready before October 1, 1999 so the cut remains a real threat to home health care agencies in the very near future. We need to address this issue and I look forward to working with my colleagues to delay or repeal this 15% cut next year.

I want to express my appreciation to the Committees on Ways and Means and Commerce for recognizing the situation home health care agencies and their Medicare beneficiaries face. Home health care is an important service that we must work our hardest to preserve. Home health care allows seniors to remain home and retain their dignity and independence. While this legislation does not accomplish all I had wanted, I support its efforts, applaud its goal and urge my colleagues to support it.

SENSE OF HOUSE REGARDING NATIONAL SCIENCE POLICY

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 8, 1998

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on behalf of this resolution, which states that the report entitled ''Unlocking Our Future: Toward a New National Science Policy'' shall be used by this Congress as a starting point for our future science policy.

I would first like to recognize the hard work that Congressman EHLERS has put into this report. I would also like to let him know that I look forward to working with him, and the other Members of the Science Committee in the future, towards implementing some of the ideas set forth in this Report.

However, I would also like to add that I support this resolution because it indicates that this report should ''serve as a framework for future deliberations''. It is a start to a process, one which I hope to work within so that others can add their views and values to the development of a true ''National Science Policy''. Therefore, I would like to note some issues, which were omitted from the report, which I hope will be added to our agenda on science, math, and engineering.

The report fails to fully address the problem of under-represented populations in the fields of science and technology. We all know that there is a severe shortage of minorities, women, and people with disabilities in these areas, yet the report does not make any real acknowledgement of the situation, and as a result, it does not contain any ways to make it any better. I hope to change that as we move forward in the development of our National Science Policy.

I believe that Congress should play a role in making sure that every segment of society receives the benefits of, and helps develop our scientific advances. Already, we have passed legislation, with bi-partisan support, to improve the involvement of minorities and women in the hard sciences. Just a few weeks ago, we overwhelmingly passed the Advancement of Women in Science, Engineering, and Technology Act, which will ensure that women are encouraged to enter the fields of science and technology. I have also gotten bipartisan support in the Science Committee, where I was able to amend several bills to ensure that minority students are able to take advantage of federal grant programs made available through the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and NASA. I am proud of that work, not only because of what it does for under-represented groups in science, but also because my friends on the other side of the aisle saw the importance of the issue, and were willing to make the decision that we need to get all Americans involved in science. Therefore, I would propose that any official ''National Science Policy'' include this important issue so that we can continue to work to improve this situation throughout the next Congress.

I also believe that we need to work to include the social and behavioral sciences in our science policy, which were given little or no attention in this report. Although I see the importance in making sure that we progress in the area of basic research and the ''hard sciences'', we should not focus on those two disciplines exclusively. The social sciences should continue to be developed so that we can better grapple with problems that affect our entire nation, like improving our education system, and working towards better public health. Furthermore, the behavioral scientists have a unique understanding of the human mind that cannot be captured by biologists or medical doctors.

For the report to omit these important disciplines is a disservice to those respective scientific communities, and it is only worsened by the fact that the Report advocates that the hard sciences be used actively in the legislative process. While I applaud the application of the hard sciences to our activities, I also see the social and behavioral sciences playing an important role here in Congress, and will work towards ensuring it. This is especially true in light of the fact that the courts have actively rebuked the use of social science materials in cases like McClesky v. Kemp (1987). Although I do not agree with the outcome of that case, I feel that it properly illustrates the fact that the social sciences, and the use of statistics, must be used to remedy the problems that afflict large segments of society—like the undercount in the Census. It is more than ironic that through current times, the most compelling use of a social science study by the judiciary created perhaps the most monumental court decision of our time, Brown v. Board of Education. For those reasons, I hope that we can better integrate all of the sciences in our National Science Policy.

I would also like to add that I hope our National Science Policy will include further efforts