

one of the most basic in our nature. With this in mind, it is my pleasure to join Senators MOYNIHAN, JEFFORDS, and KENNEDY to introduce legislation that while simple in purpose will be infinite in application and influence. Our objective? To help people with disabilities go to work.

In 1990, Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act. That law made an important statement about this nation's commitment to independence and opportunity for people with disabilities. Since then, barriers that had made some of even the simplest daily tasks difficult or even impossible have been lifted. Millions of Americans have gone back to work or found their daily chores to be more accessible—easier to address and accomplish.

Despite these successes and the progress that has been made in the ensuing eight years, there are still serious obstacles for too many people with disabilities—obstacles that stand in the way of their realizing the most basic and important opportunity of getting a job.

With this legislation, we begin to address some of the remaining impediments to employment for people with disabilities. These include the lack of access to health insurance and fundamental job assistance.

At a hearing held by the Finance Committee last July, witness after witness testified about the importance of health insurance for people with disabilities trying to enter the workforce. Jeff Bangsberg of the Minnesota Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities put it best when he said that “having appropriate, affordable health care is a critical factor in decisions people with disabilities make about working. Many individuals are afraid to work because they can't afford to lose access to continued Medicaid coverage.”

The simple fact, Mr. President, is that people with disabilities are often presented with a Catch-22 between working and losing their Medicaid or Medicare. This is a choice they should not have to make. But even modest earnings can result in a loss of eligibility for Medicaid or Medicare. Without health insurance, medical treatment often becomes prohibitively expensive for individuals with disabilities, and without medical treatment it becomes impossible for many to work.

My constituents in Delaware have made it clear that lack of access to health insurance is a real and seemingly insurmountable barrier to employment. Larry Henderson, Chair of Delaware's Developmental Disabilities Planning Council, supports our bill “because it does not penalize persons with disabilities for working in that it allows for continued access to health care.”

Our bill is designed to empower States to break this cycle of uncertainty by making it possible for people with disabilities who choose to work to do so without jeopardizing health insurance access.

We do this by creating two new Medicaid options. The first option builds on a change enacted in the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 (BBA). That law allows States to permit people with disabilities to buy-in to Medicaid who would otherwise be eligible except that they earned too much. The new change would eliminate the income cap on this buy-in option.

The second Medicaid change would make it possible for States to permit a similar Medicaid buy-in option for individuals with a severe, medically determinable impairment who would otherwise lose eligibility because of medical improvement.

Let me also note that both Medicaid expansions would be voluntary on the part of each State.

Under both options, States would be able to set their own cost-sharing requirements for people with disabilities who enroll. States could require individuals buying into the program to pay 100 percent of premium costs in order to participate. The bill also extends Medicare Part A coverage for a ten-year trial period for individuals on SSDI who return to work.

In addition to these health coverage innovations, the bill also provides a user-friendly, public-private approach to job placement. Because of a new, innovative payment system, vocational rehabilitation agencies will be rewarded for helping people remain on the job, not just getting a job.

Mr. President, this combination of health care and job assistance will help disabled Americans succeed in the work place. And our society will be enriched by unleashing the creativity and industry of people with disabilities eager to go to work.

I encourage my colleagues to cosponsor this legislation. And it is my intention to hole a hearing on the bill in the Finance Committee next week and mark it up later this spring.●

BATTLESHIP “MISSOURI” MEMORIAL

● Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I rise today because this is a special day in our nation's history. On this day in 1944, Harry S. Truman, a proud Missourian and U.S. Senator at the time, authorized the christening of the U.S.S. *Missouri*. The *Missouri* is this country's last and most celebrated battleship. Senator Truman's 19-year old daughter, Margaret, christened this great battleship and sent the “Mighty Mo” and her crew on missions for our Armed Forces in World War II, the Korean War, and Operations Desert Storm—a time of service spanning nearly half a century. Today she begins a new era of service as a memorial to educate and remind new generations of Americans about the great sacrifices and even greater victories that have occurred during her military service. She is a symbol of American triumph and spirit as she majestically stands watch over the U.S.S. *Arizona* memorial in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

Today, in this unstable world, we should re-commit ourselves to honoring lasting symbols of unity and dedication. The 900-foot Battleship *Missouri* is one such symbol. This era of patriotism, sacrifice, bravery, and duty will not be forgotten, and in fact must be revered, remembered, and taught to our children and grandchildren.

For the United States, World War II began with a surprise attack on the naval base at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. It finally ended on the decks of the “Mighty Mo” on September 2, 1945. On that day, General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers, and Chester Nimitz, Fleet Admiral of the U.S. Navy, signed the Instrument of Surrender on behalf of the Allied Powers and the United States. It is a moment that will now forever be immortalized to America and citizens of the world.

Most importantly, we need to remember that the “Mighty Mo” would not have played such an important role without the brave and true service of America's servicemen and their families. These men risked their lives at great personal sacrifice, all in the name of our country. They are the backbone of the great history of the U.S.S. *Missouri*. Many of these veterans are from the State of Missouri, including Seaman John C. Truman, the nephew of our 33rd president.

Today, January 29, 1999, is yet another significant day in the service of the U.S.S. *Missouri*—for today she opens permanently to the public as the Battleship Missouri Memorial. I urge all Missourians and all Americans to go see this great ship and experience her glorious history firsthand. I thank the U.S. Navy and the U.S.S. Missouri Memorial Association for creating such a special memorial for the world to enjoy for generations to come.

Congratulations to all involved for getting this memorial up and running. Congratulations to my friend Senator DANIEL INOUE, who has been personally involved in this project. Finally, congratulations to the U.S. Navy, the people of Hawaii, the people of Missouri, and all Americans who now have the opportunity to visit and experience a crucial part of our great state's heritage.●

NATIONAL APPRECIATION DAY FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

● Mr. FITZGERALD. Mr. President, today I want to recognize National Appreciation Day for Catholic Schools, a day to acknowledge the important and valuable contributions Catholic schools make to our nation's children, to local communities, and to the nation. Nationally, there are over 7.6 million students in 8,200 Catholic schools. In my home state of Illinois, there are over 215,000 students in 598 Catholic schools. In addition, I am a product of Catholic education, having attended Catholic schools for both elementary and high school.