

under the Balanced Budget Act. While some of the changes under the Balanced Budget Act were good, some of the changes are now negatively impacting Medicare beneficiaries.

I have heard from many constituents regarding home health care changes under the Balanced Budget Act and the various regulations that HCFA has imposed. In fact, last year, I received some 1500 letters from both home health care providers and beneficiaries. I echo their concerns when I say that the interim payment system penalizes cost efficient home health providers, like those in Michigan, while rewarding higher cost agencies.

Not only does the IPS penalize agencies that attempted to keep their costs down in 1994, but the new regulations which HCFA has imposed on the agencies are quite burdensome. There is no more poignant story to demonstrate the undue burdens being placed on home health care providers than that of Linda Stock, a Michigan home health care provider. This month Ms. Stock testified before the PSI Subcommittee about the problems that home care providers were having, particularly cost efficient home care providers like her own. Last week Ms. Stock called to let me know that she has resigned from her job because she did not feel that she could ask her staff to implement regulations such as OASIS (Outcome and Assessment Information Set) and the 15 minute incremental home health reporting requirement. It is tragic that a committed health care provider such as Linda Stock would feel the need to resign from her job rather than implement regulations which she believed were unfair to both beneficiaries and providers.

So what can be done in the face of these problems? I believe that the bill we are introducing today, if enacted, could go a long way towards helping Ms. Stock and others like her.

Last year I worked on a bill with Senator COLLINS to revise the payment formula used to calculate the per beneficiary limit. That bill would have created new winners and losers under the IPS. This year's bill does not attempt to revise the formula, and therefore avoids the formula fight which made action on this issue so difficult last year. Our new bill makes needed adjustments to the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 and related federal regulations.

Though technical in nature, I would like to read the major provisions found in the bill:

(1) The bill will eliminate the automatic 15 per cent reduction in Medicare home health payments now scheduled for October 1, 2000.

(2) The bill will provide supplemental payments to home health agencies on a patient by patient basis if the cost of care for an individual is considered by the Secretary to be significantly higher than average due to the patient's particular health and functional condition.

(3) The bill will increase the per beneficiary cost limit for agencies with limits below the national average to the national average cost per patient over a three year period or until the Medicare home health prospective payment system is implemented.

(4) The bill will revise the surety bond requirement for home health agencies to more appropriately target fraud

(5) The bill will extend the IPS overpayment recoupment period to three years without interest

(6) The bill will eliminate the 15 minute incremental reporting period

(7) The bill temporarily maintains the Periodic Interim Payment (PIP) program, a program that permits HCFA to make payments to agencies based on historical payment levels—prior to the final settlement of claims and cost reports.

I believe that this bill provides an opportunity for us to move forward in solving some of the problems caused by the Balanced Budget Act. We should pass this common sense bill that will ensure that home care is accessible to those seniors who so desperately need it.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Wednesday, June 30, 1999, the federal debt stood at \$5,638,780,248,334.54 (Five trillion, six hundred thirty-eight billion, seven hundred eighty million, two hundred forty-eight thousand, three hundred thirty-four dollars and fifty-four cents).

One year ago, June 30, 1998, the federal debt stood at \$5,547,935,000,000 (Five trillion, five hundred forty-seven billion, nine hundred thirty-five million).

Five years ago, June 30, 1994, the federal debt stood at \$4,645,802,000,000 (Four trillion, six hundred forty-five billion, eight hundred two million).

Ten years ago, June 30, 1989, the federal debt stood at \$2,799,923,000,000 (Two trillion, seven hundred ninety-nine billion, nine hundred twenty-three million).

Twenty-five years ago, June 30, 1974, the federal debt stood at \$476,006,000,000 (Four hundred seventy-six billion, six million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$5 trillion—\$5,162,774,248,334.54 (Five trillion, one hundred sixty-two billion, seven hundred seventy-four million, two hundred forty-eight thousand, three hundred thirty-four dollars and fifty-four cents) during the past 25 years.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Williams, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in the executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate

messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 3:01 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Hanrahan, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 66. An act to preserve the cultural resources of the Route 66 corridor and to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to provide assistance.

H.R. 592. An act to designate a portion of Gateway National Recreation Area as "World War Veterans park at Miller Field."

H.R. 791. An act to amend the National Trails System Act to designate the route of the War of 1812 British invasion of Maryland and Washington, District of Columbia, and the route of the American defense, for study for potential addition to the national trails systems.

H.R. 1218. An act to amend title 18, United States Code, to prohibit taking minors across State lines in circumvention of laws requiring the involvement of parents in abortion decisions.

The message also announced that the House agrees to the report of the committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 775) to establish certain procedures for civil actions brought for damages relating to the failure for civil actions brought for damages relating to the failure of any device or system to process or otherwise deal with the transition from the year 1999 to the year 200, and for other purposes.

At 6:45 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Hanrahan, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House insists upon its amendment to the bill (S. 1059) to authorize appropriations for fiscal years 2000 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe personnel strengths for such fiscal year for the Armed Forces, and for other purposes, disagreed to by the Senate, and agrees to the conference asked by the Senate on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon; and appoints the following Members as the managers of the conference on the part of the Houses:

From the Committee on Armed Services; for consideration of the Senate bill and the House amendment, and modifications committed to conference: Mr. SPENCE, Mr. STUMP, Mr. HUNTER, Mr. BATEMAN, Mr. HANSEN, Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania, Mr. HEFLEY, Mr. SAXTON, Mr. BUYER, Mrs. FOWLER, Mr. McHUGH, Mr. TALENT, Mr. EVERETT, Mr. BARLETT of Maryland, Mr. McKEON, Mr. WATTS of Oklahoma, Mr. THORNBERRY, Mr. HOSTETTLER, Mr.