

North Dakota and Wisconsin to continue using resident assistants for feeding and hydration, while a demonstration project is conducted in our states and others to evaluate what kind of impact the use of these staff has on the quality of feeding and hydration services provided to nursing home patients and on the recruitment and retention of nursing staff. If after the three-year demonstration project, the Secretary of Health and Human Services determines that the use of resident assistants does not result in a reduction in the quality of feeding and hydrating of nursing home residents or in a decrease in the recruitment and retention of nursing staff, other nursing homes around the country would be allowed to use resident assistants to help with feeding and hydration tasks.

This legislation includes a number of safeguards designed to protect nursing home patients. For instance, nursing homes are prohibited from using resident assistants to replace existing nursing staff or to count these assistants toward minimum nursing staffing requirements. In addition, resident assistants would have to complete a state-approved training program related to the feeding and hydration tasks they would be performing. Of course, nursing homes would not be able to use resident assistants to administer medication, provide direct medical care, or perform other nursing tasks.

I recognize that this bill is not the only answer or the whole answer for addressing the staffing crisis in nursing homes. I want to work with my colleagues in Congress, nursing homes, and advocates for nursing home residents to address this larger issue of the staffing shortage.

The staffing shortage in nursing homes is not the only reason for malnutrition and dehydration of patients, but it certainly contributes to the problem. A June, 2000 Commonwealth Fund study estimated that 35 to 85 percent of nursing home patients are malnourished, in part because they do not receive enough assistance from aides while eating because the aides must assist as many as 15 to 20 patients at mealtime. According to a Los Angeles Times article earlier this week, a University of California-San Francisco professor who observed 100 nursing home residents with eating problems found that nursing home workers were often so rushed that they "shoveled" food into their patients' mouths, causing choking and coughing.

The resident assistants in North Dakota provide compassionate care and often have more time to coax their patients into eating, something that overworked certified nurse aides generally don't have time for. I am convinced that if we reduce the number of staff in North Dakota nursing homes, which is what will happen if long-term care facilities can no longer use resident assistants, then patients in North Dakota will suffer.

One resident assistant in North Dakota told me about a patient she feeds who has difficulty holding her head up when she eats. The resident assistant said that when she was on vacation, her patient lost seven pounds. Fortunately, after a few weeks back on the job, the resident assistant got her patient's weight back up to where it needed to be. However, if this resident assistant was forced to leave her post permanently, that weight loss may have been long-term and ultimately life-threatening.

I believe the Medicare and Medicaid Nursing Services Quality Improvement Act is a step that Congress can take to address both the staffing shortage and the malnutrition of patients. This is not the only solution and it may not be the best solution, but I hope my colleagues will work with Senator KOHL, Senator CONRAD and me to tackle these serious issues confronting long-term care facilities and their patients.

MILITARY PERSONNEL DETAINED BY THE PRC

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I rise today as the Chairman of the Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to speak to S. Res. 66.

As we are all now aware, at 9:15 a.m. local time on April 1, 2001, a collision occurred between a United States military EP-3E Aries II reconnaissance aircraft flying off the coast of the People's Republic of China, PRC and one of two F-8 jet fighters from the People's Liberation Army-Air Force sent to intercept it. Both countries agree that the collision occurred in international airspace over the South China Sea near the Chinese island province of Hainan. Due to the damage incurred in the accidental collision, the F-8 and its pilot were lost at sea and the EP-3E was required to make a "Mayday" distress call on the internationally recognized emergency radio frequency.

In fact, the damage to our plane was so bad that it effectuated an emergency landing at a military airbase at Lingshui, Hainan. Upon landing, the twenty-four United States military personnel aboard the EP-3E were removed from the aircraft by Chinese military personnel and detained in an undisclosed location, notwithstanding the fact that the crew of an aircraft forced to land on foreign soil in an emergency is considered under international norms to have sovereign immunity.

Chinese authorities then unnecessarily prevented United States military and consular officials from meeting with the crew members until April 3, 2001, and even then permitted only a short, supervised visit. There is absolutely *no* reason why we should not have been allowed at the very least telephone access to our military people. China is not a technologically backward country without phone service; our people are not being held in

some isolated mountain village in the middle of a jungle. China's behavior in this case in purposefully keeping us from contacting the aircrew is, to me, disturbing.

In addition, I am also concerned that in contravention of international norms, Chinese officials have boarded the aircraft and have apparently removed portions of the equipment from it. International law recognizes both the right of the crew of an aircraft in distress to land safely on foreign soil and the inviolable sovereignty of an aircraft in distress that has landed on foreign soil; it also recognizes the right of a nation which has had an aircraft land in distress on foreign soil to have its citizens and aircraft returned safely and without undue delay.

China's flaunting of these conventions disturbs me not just because of the ramifications in this particular case, but also because it has the capability of wrecking greater havoc on the overall bilateral US-PRC relationship, a relationship I believe to be our most important in Asia along with Japan and South Korea. The Chinese government needs to realize that this issue is bigger than just this crew and this plane. This is about trust, about whether the PRC can be trusted to live up to its word, to live up to international agreements which it has signed, and to be a part of the world community of nations. So far, they have turned their backs on those agreements, and on their obligations. They have shown me, and other Members of Congress, that whether they can be trusted is presently open to question.

If this matter is not resolved immediately and satisfactorily, then the Congress needs to rethink whether Beijing can be trusted to fulfill its obligations as a member of the WTO. And while I have previously stated that I believe it would be a mistake to include such materiel as Aegis-equipped destroyers in this year's weapons sales to Taiwan, if Beijing remains intransigent and continues to violate norms of decent international behavior in this case, then I—for one—will begin to reassess whether Taiwan is not justified in its mistrust of the PRC and whether such sales might not now be justified. It would truly be a shame if, at the beginning of a new Administration, an Administration that has not even had a chance yet to formulate or articulate its China policy, this situation poisoned the well.

The resolution is simple. It expresses our regret over the damage to the aircraft and the loss of life resulting from the collision. It calls on the Chinese government to release the crew, who are, of course, utmost in our thoughts and concern; the aircraft, and the equipment from the aircraft. Finally, it supports President Bush in his efforts. I am pleased that the resolution has a bipartisan list of seventy-five co-sponsors, including the ranking member of the East Asia Subcommittee [Mr. KERRY]; the very distinguished

President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND]; the distinguished chairman of the Armed Services Committee [Mr. WARNER]; the Chairman of the Energy Committee [Mr. MURKOWSKI]; three members and the ranking minority member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: the distinguished Senator from Indiana [Mr. LUGAR], Mr. SMITH of Oregon and Mr. BROWNBACK, and Senator BIDEN; two Senators who I consider among the most knowledgeable on China in the Senate, Senator FEINSTEIN and Senator BAUCUS; and one of our newest members, Senator CLINTON.

I hope that we will act to put the Senate on record on this issue.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business Friday, April 20, 2001, the Federal debt stood at \$5,713,631,148,647.61. Five trillion, seven hundred thirteen billion, six hundred thirty-one million, one hundred forty-eight thousand, six hundred forty-seven dollars and sixty-one cents.

One year ago, April 20, 2000, the Federal debt stood at \$5,707,061,000,000 Five trillion, seven hundred seven billion, sixty-one million.

Fifteen years ago, April 20, 1986, the Federal debt stood at \$1,962,745,000,000, One trillion, nine hundred sixty-two billion, seven hundred forty-five million.

Twenty-five years ago, April 20, 1976, the Federal debt stood at \$604,399,000,000, Six hundred four billion, three hundred ninety-nine million, which reflects a debt increase of more than \$5 trillion, \$5,109,232,148,647.61. Five trillion, one hundred nine billion, two hundred thirty-two million, one hundred forty-eight thousand, six hundred forty-seven dollars and sixty-one cents during the past 25 years.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

MOREHOUSE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

• Mr. CLELAND. Mr. President, 25 years ago the National Medical Association and other prominent organizations endorsed the development of the Medical School at Morehouse College in Atlanta, GA. This came in light of studies that revealed first, a severe shortage of African American and other minority physicians in the United States, particularly in Georgia and second, that African Americans suffered disproportionately from major diseases. Since its inception, Morehouse School of Medicine has worked to help solve our nation's health care crisis by graduating top-quality physicians who dedicate themselves to serving the more than 32 million people in this country who live in medically neglected communities. More than 80 percent of Morehouse School of Medicine graduates practice in underserved com-

munities. Each year, the School graduates five times the national average of African Americans completing their studies at accredited medical schools in this country.

Since 1975, Morehouse School of Medicine has grown from an entry class of 25 students to a current 40 students per class. Each year, over 20,000 Georgians who are disadvantaged are served by approximately 50 community health promotion projects sponsored by Morehouse School of Medicine. These projects include prevention initiatives associated with substance abuse, teen pregnancy, geriatric services, cancer, lead poisoning and violence prevention. In addition to the Medical School's activities in community health promotion, Morehouse School of Medicine provides about 25,000 patient encounters for approximately 10,000 people per year in community clinics throughout metropolitan Atlanta area. The student body of Morehouse School of Medicine continues to excel and 100 percent of the institution's family medicine and surgery residents passed their board exams in their first sitting for 2 years in a row.

These accomplishments stem in part from the strong leadership of Morehouse School of Medicine's founding dean and president, Louis W. Sullivan, M.D., who has been with the Medical School since its inception. Aside from his years in Washington as U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, Dr. Sullivan has dedicated his life's work to producing top-quality physicians. During his tenure, Morehouse School of Medicine established several programs. These include a 4-year undergraduate medical education program, seven residency programs and several centers of excellence including the National Center for Primary Care, the Neuroscience Institute, the Cardiovascular Institute and the NASA/Space Medicine and Life Science Research Center, the first of its kind at a minority medical institution.

Dr. Sullivan has worked tirelessly to provide vision and direction for the institution's future, while continuing to preserve the very best traditions of its past. Morehouse School of Medicine, the State of Georgia and our Nation are truly blessed to have his leadership.●

TRIBUTE TO THE POSTAL EMPLOYEES OF THE NEW HAMPSHIRE PERFORMANCE CLUSTER

• Mr. SMITH of New Hampshire. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the Postal Employees of the New Hampshire Performance Cluster, a group of dedicated public servants who have been recognized for exemplary performance of service duties. On April 3rd of this year, The Postal Employees of the New Hampshire Performance Cluster were recognized with the Postal Service's highest award, the Chief Operating Officer Award for overall excellence in the area of customer satisfaction.

New Hampshire Postal Employees have been honored along with four other districts in the nation receiving the Order of the Yellow Jersey Award for Excellence in customer service. This prestigious award is based on the percentage of residential customers who rated the postal service employees as excellent in four areas: overall performance, courteous and friendly clerks, consistency of mail delivery and accuracy of mail delivery.

The Postal Employees of the New Hampshire Performance Cluster have provided dedicated service to the citizens of our state. The people of our state look upon them with tremendous gratitude for all that they have done.

It is an honor and a privilege to serve the Postal Employees of the New Hampshire Performance Center in the United States.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

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

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in 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.)

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, which were referred as indicated:

EC-1365. A communication from the General Counsel of the Central Intelligence Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a vacancy in the position of Inspector General and the designation of an Acting Inspector General; to the Committee on Intelligence.

EC-1366. A communication from the Director of the Office of Regulations Management, Veterans Benefits Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Certification of Evidence for Proof of Service" (RIN2900-AJ55) received on April 18, 2001; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

EC-1367. A communication from the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report covering those cases in which equitable relief was granted in calendar year 2000; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

EC-1368. A communication from the Inspector General, Department of Veterans Affairs, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of the Office of Inspector General Strategic Plan for 2001 through 2006; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

EC-1369. A communication from the Chief of the Regulations Unit, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule