

have significant rehabilitation needs. Some of these beneficiaries have already exceeded their therapy limits for 2010.

Since the exceptions process that would have allowed these patients to receive more needed therapy has expired, beneficiaries with the greatest need for therapy will be the hardest hit. Congress must address this issue immediately.

A second issue of major concern is the need for additional payment for mental health services. A provision that expired at the end of last year provided an additional 5-percent payment for Medicare mental health services provided by psychologists and mental health counselors. This provision has been key to improving access to mental health care services for veterans and other military personnel suffering from post-traumatic stress and other disorders since TRICARE coverage is based on Medicare rates.

Significant shortages of mental health personnel have made it exceedingly difficult for Medicare beneficiaries and some of our military returning from overseas to find this critically needed help. The expiration of this provision has made it even more difficult for them to obtain these services. Congress needs to act immediately to help Medicare beneficiaries and members of the Armed Forces in need of mental health services.

A third issue concerns additional payments for ambulance services that are routinely extended, year after year. Many ambulance providers need them to survive. But those provisions also expired at the end of last year.

Another provision would ensure that Medicare beneficiaries can continue to get vital medical supplies such as diabetic test strips, canes, nebulizers, and wound care products from their local community pharmacies.

Under current law, suppliers of durable medical equipment, prosthetics, orthotics, and other supplies must get accredited to prove they comply with quality standards. Many eligible professionals, such as physicians, nurse practitioners, physical therapists, and others are specifically exempted from this requirement. This provision would exempt pharmacies from being accredited under certain circumstances. Pharmacies must have been enrolled as a Medicare supplier with a provider number for at least 2 years, have DME billings that are less than 5 percent of their total sales, be in good standing with Medicare, and meet other criteria.

Medicare beneficiaries living in rural and underserved areas are particularly at risk of losing access to these critical medical products. This provision is essential to ensure they do not.

There are also a number of expired provisions in this package that improve payment for hospitals, especially rural hospitals. These hospitals rely on these provisions to keep their doors open.

The impact of a hospital shutting its doors would be especially hard on rural

and underserved areas where hospitals are the only point of access for health care.

Our country is facing record unemployment and Americans are struggling to make ends meet. The failure to extend these essential Medicare provisions immediately will make access to health care or needed medical services simply unavailable for many beneficiaries. The impact will be even worse for those in rural areas already facing health care access problems.

These examples show some of the damage that failing to extend these Medicare provisions will do to our seniors' health care.

We need to get back to work on the bipartisan package that was in the works until the Senate Democratic leadership's dramatic change in direction.

Medicare beneficiaries are counting on us to work together and get this done.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate convenes Wednesday, February 24, all postcloture time be considered expired, except for any time available until 9:55 a.m., and that at 9:55 a.m. the Senate proceed to vote on a motion to waive the applicable budget points of order; further, that if the points of order are waived, without further intervening action, the second-degree amendment be withdrawn and no further amendments be in order; the Senate then proceed to vote on the Reid motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 2847, with amendment No. 3310; provided further that upon disposition of the House message with respect to H.R. 2847, the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

GUNS ON UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, in 2009, bills aimed at weakening the ability of universities to regulate the possession of firearms on campus were introduced in 12 State legislatures, including the

Michigan State Legislature. In 2008, 17 States saw similar legislation introduced. Fortunately for the safety of students, faculty, and visitors, none of these bills passed. In fact, according to the Wall Street Journal, as of July 2009, State legislative efforts to allow firearms on college campuses had been defeated 34 straight times nationwide. However, while this statistic demonstrates a clear national consensus that guns do not belong at universities, the National Rifle Association, NRA, continues to push for weaker gun regulations.

Already in 2010, efforts have been undertaken that would weaken the ability of colleges to determine their own security needs in Arizona, Georgia, Virginia, and Colorado. These legislative efforts are part of a strategy to pressure State legislatures into passing legislation that would force colleges to allow the possession and use of firearms by students, faculty, and others on campus. According to a report from the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, entitled "No Gun Left Behind: The Gun Lobby's Campaign to Push Guns into Colleges and Schools," this strategy can be seen as a response to the horrific shootings at Virginia Tech in 2007. According to this strategy, the way to prevent future violence on college campuses is to have more guns on campuses.

Increasing the number of guns in university settings is likely to increase the threat of violence. Every day at colleges across the country, young people engage in risky behaviors involving alcohol and drugs. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, binge drinking and illegal drug use is highest among 18- to 24-year-olds. Furthermore, a report by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University found that "nearly half of America's full-time college students abuse drugs or drink on binges at least once a month." This behavior is dangerous enough without introducing a weapon into the environment. Additional threats to public safety stemming from firearms on campuses include the high risk of gun thefts in typically unsecure college living environments, as well as an increase in the number of accidental shootings.

Students and faculty should feel safe while on campus. Contrary to the claims of some, more guns on campus will not create a more secure campus. More guns will increase the threat of violence, and that is why legislation that would force universities to allow firearms on campus is misguided.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SPECIALIST MARC DECOTEAU

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I rise today to remember and honor Army SPC Marc Paul Decoteau of Waterville Valley, NH, for his service and supreme sacrifice for his country.

Specialist Decoteau demonstrated a willingness and dedication to serve and