

I helped ensure that Rhode Island would receive additional NSP funding to assist communities hit hardest by the foreclosure crisis. Based on my visits to many NSP sites in Rhode Island, the State's NSP allotment of \$26 million is making a difference in neighborhoods all over the State. This crucial investment in Rhode Island has not only begun to help reverse the fallout from foreclosures, but has also provided families with affordable rental housing.

But more needs to be done. According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, despite three rounds of NSP funding, "there is unaddressed high need in more than 76 percent of high need census tracts across the country." According to the Federal Reserve's recent housing white paper, the number of new homes that will have completed the foreclosure process could be as high as 1 million properties per year in 2012 and 2013.

We need to act to gain traction in our housing market so that we can firmly anchor a sustainable economic recovery that actually reaches and touches all Americans.

The Project Rebuild Act takes us in the right direction towards gaining this needed traction by making important enhancements to NSP, such as broadening eligible uses to include commercial vacancies.

It would offer new grants for fixing up vacant commercial properties, complementing the abilities of private developers.

It would also increase support for "land banking." Land banks work with communities to buy, hold, and redevelop distressed properties as part of a long-term redevelopment strategy. Our bill would help more communities utilize successful land bank models and provide additional resources for Rhode Island Housing's Land Bank.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, HUD, estimates Project Rebuild could create over 190,000 jobs and renovate 150,000 properties nationwide.

Just as NSP was supported on a bipartisan basis, I hope we can build bipartisan support for this effort to help revitalize neighborhoods, create jobs, and accelerate economic growth.

I urge my colleagues to join us in supporting this bill and other efforts to address foreclosures and bolster our nation's recovery.

By Mr. CONRAD:

S. 2163. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to improve Medicare benefits for individuals with kidney disease, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I am introducing the Kidney Disease Equitable Access, Prevention, and Research Act. This legislation recognizes the importance of patient choice, access to care, and educational efforts to assist the more than 400,000 Americans with kidney failure to manage their disease and understand the treatment options.

First, the legislation seeks to maintain patient choice to retain their private insurance options, even after they qualify for Medicare by virtue of their disease state. Under current law, an individual diagnosed with kidney failure, or End Stage Renal Disease, ESRD, has the choice to maintain his/her current group health plan or transition immediately to Medicare. The legislation introduced today would direct the Secretary to clarify that this long-standing requirement also applies to group health plans established through Health Benefit Exchanges, as well as more traditional plans.

Second, the legislation seeks to improve access to preventive and educational services by expanding access to coverage for kidney disease education services.

Finally, the legislation seeks to address barriers to receiving this life-sustaining treatment, including transportation issues and factors that lead to disparities among minority populations. It also calls on the Secretary to report on gaps in quality and care management metrics to support ongoing efforts to continue quality improvement in the Medicare ESRD program.

I call on my colleagues to reaffirm the Congressional commitment to Americans with ESRD by ensuring equitable access to care for individuals with kidney disease, supporting research to improve access to high quality kidney care, and improving access to preventive care for individuals with ESRD. The Kidney Disease Equitable Access, Prevention, and Research Act is a comprehensive bill that improves upon the Medicare ESRD program. I urge my colleagues to join with me in supporting this important legislation.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 389—DESIGNATING THE FIRST WEEK OF APRIL 2012 AS "NATIONAL ASBESTOS AWARENESS WEEK"

Mr. BAUCUS (for himself, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. REID of Nevada, Mr. DURBIN, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. TESTER, Mr. ISAKSON, and Mrs. BOXER) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 389

Whereas dangerous asbestos fibers are invisible and cannot be smelled or tasted;

Whereas the inhalation of airborne asbestos fibers can cause significant damage;

Whereas asbestos fibers can cause cancer such as mesothelioma, asbestosis, and other health problems;

Whereas asbestos-related diseases can take 10 to 50 years to present themselves;

Whereas the expected survival time for those diagnosed with mesothelioma is between 6 and 24 months;

Whereas, generally, little is known about late-stage treatment of asbestos-related diseases, and there is no cure for such diseases;

Whereas early detection of asbestos-related diseases may give some patients in-

creased treatment options and might improve their prognoses;

Whereas the United States has substantially reduced its consumption of asbestos, yet continues to consume almost 1,100 metric tons of the fibrous mineral for use in certain products throughout the United States;

Whereas asbestos-related diseases have killed thousands of people in the United States;

Whereas exposure to asbestos continues, but safety and prevention of asbestos exposure already has significantly reduced the incidence of asbestos-related diseases and can further reduce the incidence of such diseases;

Whereas asbestos has been a cause of occupational cancer;

Whereas thousands of workers in the United States face significant asbestos exposure;

Whereas thousands of people in the United States die from asbestos-related diseases every year;

Whereas a significant percentage of all asbestos-related disease victims were exposed to asbestos on naval ships and in shipyards;

Whereas asbestos was used in the construction of a significant number of office buildings and public facilities built before 1975;

Whereas people in the small community of Libby, Montana suffer from asbestos-related diseases, including mesothelioma, at a significantly higher rate than people in the United States as a whole; and

Whereas the establishment of a "National Asbestos Awareness Week" will raise public awareness about the prevalence of asbestos-related diseases and the dangers of asbestos exposure: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates the first week of April 2012 as "National Asbestos Awareness Week";

(2) urges the Surgeon General to warn and educate people about the public health issue of asbestos exposure, which may be hazardous to their health; and

(3) respectfully requests that the Secretary of the Senate transmit a copy of this resolution to the Office of the Surgeon General.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 1800. Mrs. FEINSTEIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 1761 proposed by Mr. REID to the bill S. 1813, to reauthorize Federal-aid highway and highway safety construction programs, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 1801. Mr. HARKIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 1761 proposed by Mr. REID to the bill S. 1813, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 1802. Mr. LEAHY submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 1761 proposed by Mr. REID to the bill S. 1813, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 1803. Mr. LEAHY submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 1761 proposed by Mr. REID to the bill S. 1813, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 1804. Mr. HARKIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 1813, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 1805. Mr. ROBERTS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 1741 submitted by Mr. LEVIN (for himself and Mr. CONRAD) and intended to be proposed to the bill S. 1813, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 1806. Mr. BARRASSO submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to