

for-services rates in an area. People love to talk about how Medicare Advantage plans are reimbursed too much, but unfortunately that rally cry is based off a study that did not compare apples to apples. If you compare the cost of delivering Part A and B services alone, Medicare Advantage plans are only paid 2.8 percent more than Medicare FFS. I am comfortable paying 2.8 percent more because seniors have more choices, they receive more comprehensive benefits, and their care is coordinated under Medicare Advantage plans. Medicare Advantage plans actually match treatments with diseases and maintenance care with chronic conditions.

Senator COBURN and I want to move Medicare Advantage from competition-lite to full competition. We will be introducing a bill in the coming weeks that will force Medicare Advantage plans to truly compete against each other on price. Medicare Advantage plans already compete on service and quality under our bill they will have to taken lessons from Part D drug plans and compete on price.

If you have been listening from the beginning, you hopefully understand how effective competition and choice have been in two parts of the Medicare program. And you understand why I want that same robust health care competition and choice for every American. Every American deserves access to quality, affordable health care of their choice and competition between health care plans will help achieve that goal.

REBUILDING AMERICA'S IMAGE

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, our go-it-alone foreign policy over the last 8 years has severely damaged our image and stirred up anti-American sentiment around the world. We have lost the international goodwill we had following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the failed strategy of the war in Iraq has cost us a good number of allies.

A worldwide survey conducted last year of 28,000 people, asking them to rate 12 countries, put the United States at the bottom, along with Iran and Israel, when it comes to having the world's most negative image. In fact, even North Korea ranked higher than the United States in that survey. Another survey found that our favorability rating around the world dropped considerably from 2000 to 2006. For example, in Germany, we went from a favorability rating of 78 percent in 2000 to 37 percent in 2006. In Spain, only 23 percent of people have a favorable opinion of the United States. I could go on and on, but I don't think anyone can dispute the fact that our image and credibility in the world has dropped dramatically. This negative trend hurts us. It makes it more difficult to implement our foreign policy, and even threatens our national security by making the United States a target.

With that being said, as the most powerful country in the world we still have an unprecedented opportunity to both help those in less fortunate countries and help our country regain the moral authority we once held.

A lot of interesting ideas have been proposed to repair our damaged image. Some of the most creative suggestions have come from students, such as the paper I recently received from Occidental College in Los Angeles. That paper makes recommendations for United States policy changes on issues like the war in Iraq, oil and energy issues, and illegal immigration, just to name a few. Calling for the United States to lead rather than dominate, to be a beacon more than a bullhorn, this paper presents a possible path to help repair our standing in the international community. I don't agree with everything in the paper, but it is full of interesting ideas that can make a difference. It is encouraging to see that the youth of this country have taken a serious interest in our country's image. I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to take a serious look at this and other proposals to see what Congress can do to help ensure that future generations inherit a government that is well respected throughout the world.

It is my hope that with the new administration, our country will be able to turn the page of the past 8 years and focus on a foreign policy that is more constructive. I look forward to working with my colleagues and the next President to make this happen.

AMERICA'S FOSTER CARE CHILDREN

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I rise today, during National Foster Care Month, to speak for the more than a half million children living in foster care across the United States who are waiting for a loving family to adopt them.

I encourage potential parents throughout our country to open their hearts, their lives and their homes to these vulnerable children and provide them with the safe, permanent families that all children deserve. As an adoptive parent myself, I know first-hand the joy and fulfillment adoption can bring to a family, and I cannot think of a more perfect gift to give a child than the love, nurturing, and protection they need to grow.

A sense of stability is critical to the development of children. Yet, young children in foster care never know how long they will stay in one place or where they will be sent off to next, resulting in a frightening lack of consistency and security.

I recently had the chance to meet with Aaron Weaver, a young man from Nebraska, who shared with me some of his experiences in the foster care system: "Growing up in foster care, a tattered yellow vinyl suitcase always accompanied me, as I switched families, rules and routines," he said.

I hated that suitcase. It was a constant reminder of how unstable my life was, and how every day was uncertain.

Fortunately, after 6 years in Nebraska's foster care system, Aaron was finally adopted. Adoption for him meant a family who gave him unconditional love. Adoption meant the end of packing his suitcase, wondering where he would be placed next. Adoption gave him, for the first time, the freedom and confidence to think about his future not in terms of where he would be sleeping next month, but in terms of what his goals were and where he wanted to go in life.

In 2005, just 10 percent of Nebraska's foster care children were lucky enough to be adopted into new families like Aaron's, leaving nearly a thousand more waiting eagerly for adoptive homes. Unfortunately, any chance of these children being placed with adoptive parents becomes worse the longer they remain in foster care. In fact, when a child reaches the 8- to 9-year age range, the probability that child will continue to wait in foster care exceeds the probability that he or she will be adopted; and the number of children in this older age group is growing.

The Adoption Incentive Program, a Federal program first enacted into law as part of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, is up for reauthorization this year. This important program encourages State governments to find permanent homes for foster children through adoption by rewarding those States which have increased their number of placements. Additionally, the program provides special incentives to focus on finding homes for older foster children and those with special needs. I am proud to report that, through this program, my home State of Nebraska was awarded \$1,392,000 between 2000 and 2006 for finding adoptive families for 2,483 children, money which will be re-invested to make this number even greater.

I believe we have a responsibility to help foster children in Nebraska and across the Nation join loving, permanent adoptive families such as Aaron's. I hope all of you agree and will join me in my commitment to improving America's foster care system.

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize May as National Foster Care Month. I salute the thousands of families in Kentucky and throughout the country who serve as foster parents, along with those who expand their families by adopting a child from the foster care system. Unfortunately, not every child finds a home. In 2005, more than 24,000 foster children reached their 18th birthdays without being adopted. As these young adults aged out of the foster care program, they faced many of life's challenges without the family support and encouragement that many of us take for granted. With over a half million children currently in our Nation's foster care system, it is imperative that we do all that we can to ensure that they