

payment amount for renal dialysis services furnished under the medicare program.

S. 1473

At the request of Mr. ROBB, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. BAUCUS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1473, a bill to amend section 2007 of the Social Security Act to provide grant funding for additional Empowerment Zones, Enterprise Communities, and Strategic Planning Communities, and for other purposes.

S. 1500

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the names of the Senator from Washington (Mr. GORTON) and the Senator from Indiana (Mr. LUGAR) were added as cosponsors of S. 1500, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for an additional payment for services provided to certain high-cost individuals under the prospective payment system for skilled nursing facility services, and for other purposes.

S. 1517

At the request of Mr. ALLARD, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. GRAMS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1517, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to ensure that Medicare beneficiaries have continued access under current contracts to managed health care by extending the Medicare cost contract program for 3 years.

S. 1520

At the request of Mr. SMITH, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. SPECTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1520, a bill to amend the U.S. Holocaust Assets Commission Act of 1998 to extend the period by which the final report is due and to authorize additional funding.

S. 1547

At the request of Mr. BURNS, the names of the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. FRIST), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. FEINGOLD), and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. CLELAND) were added as cosponsors of S. 1547, a bill to amend the Communications Act of 1934 to require the Federal Communications Commission to preserve low-power television stations that provide community broadcasting, and for other purposes.

S. 1568

At the request of Mr. FEINGOLD, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1568, a bill imposing an immediate suspension of assistance to the Government of Indonesia until the results of the August 30, 1999, vote in East Timor have implemented, and for other purposes.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 1

At the request of Mr. THURMOND, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN) was added as a cosponsor of Senate Joint Resolution 1, a joint resolution proposing an amend-

ment to the Constitution of the United States relating to voluntary school prayer.

SENATE RESOLUTION 99

At the request of Mr. REID, the name of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. NICKLES) was added as a cosponsor of Senate Resolution 99, a resolution designating November 20, 1999, as "National Survivors for Prevention of Suicide Day."

SENATE RESOLUTION 172

At the request of Mr. BROWNBACK, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. LIEBERMAN) was added as a cosponsor of Senate Resolution 172, a resolution to establish a special committee of the Senate to address the cultural crisis facing America.

SENATE RESOLUTION 179

At the request of Mr. BIDEN, the names of the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN), the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. INOUE), and the Senator from Florida (Mr. GRAHAM) were added as cosponsors of Senate Resolution 179, a resolution designating October 15, 1999, as "National Mammography Day."

AMENDMENT NO. 1744

At the request of Mr. MCCAIN, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 1744 proposed to H.R. 2684, a bill making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, boards, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 1747

At the request of Mr. MCCAIN, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 1747 proposed to H.R. 2684, a bill making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, boards, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 1755

At the request of Mr. KERRY, the names of the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KENNEDY), the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. BINGAMAN), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. JEFFORDS), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. DASCHLE), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. ROTH), the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER), and the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. GRAMS) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 1755 intended to be proposed to H.R. 2684, a bill making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, boards, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2000

ASHCROFT AMENDMENT NO. 1787

(Ordered to lie on the table.)

Mr. ASHCROFT submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill (H.R. 2684) making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, boards, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes; as follows:

On page 17, between lines 14 and 15, insert the following:

SEC. 108. (a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following findings:

(1) The Veterans Benefits Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs is responsible for the timely and accurate processing of claims for veterans compensation and pension.

(2) The accuracy of claims processing within the Veterans Benefits Administration has been a subject of concern to Congress and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(3) While the Veterans Benefits Administration has reported in the past a 95 percent accuracy rate in processing claims, a new accuracy measurement system known as the Systematic Technical Accuracy Review found that, in 1998, initial review of veterans claims was accurate only 64 percent of the time.

(4) The Veterans Benefits Administration could lose up to 30 percent of its workforce to retirement by 2003, making adequate training for claims adjudicators even more necessary to ensure veterans claims are processed efficiently.

(5) The Veterans Benefits Administration needs to take more aggressive steps to ensure that veterans claims are processed in an accurate and timely fashion to avoid unnecessary delays in providing veterans with compensation and pension benefits.

(b) PLAN REQUIRED.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives, the Majority Leader of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives a comprehensive plan for the improvement of the processing of claims for veterans compensation and pension.

(c) ELEMENTS.—The plan under subsection (b) shall include the following:

(1) Mechanisms for the improvement of training of claims adjudicators and for the enhancement of employee accountability standards in order to ensure that initial reviews of claims are accurate and that unnecessary appeals of benefit decisions and delays in benefit payments are avoided.

(2) Mechanisms for strengthening the ability of the Veterans Benefits Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs to identify recurring errors in claims adjudications by improving data collection and management relating to—

(A) the human body and the impairments common in disability and pension claims; and

(B) recurring deficiencies in medical evidence and examinations.

(3) Mechanisms for implementing a system for reviewing claims-processing accuracy that meets the Government's internal control standard on separation of duties and the program performance audit standard on organizational independence.

(4) Quantifiable goals for each of the mechanisms developed under paragraphs (1) through (3).

(d) CONSULTATION.—In developing the plan under subsection (b), the Secretary shall consult with and obtain the views of veterans organizations and other interested parties.

(e) IMPLEMENTATION.—The Secretary shall implement the plan under subsection (b) commencing 60 days after the date of the submittal of the plan under that subsection.

(f) MODIFICATION.—(1) The Secretary may modify the plan submitted under subsection (b).

(2) Any modification under paragraph (1) shall not take effect until 30 days after the date on which the Secretary submits to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives, the Majority Leader of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives a notice regarding such modification.

(g) REPORTS.—Not later than January 1, 2000, and every 6 months thereafter, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives, the Majority Leader of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives a report assessing implementation of the plan under subsection (b) during the preceding 6 months, including an assessment of whether the goals set forth under subsection (c)(4) are being achieved.

CLELAND AMENDMENT NO. 1788

(Ordered to lie on the table.)

Mr. CLELAND submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill, H.R. 2684, *supra*; as follows:

On page 11, line 11, strike "\$97,256,000" and insert "\$99,756,000, of which \$500,000 shall be available for development of national cemeteries in each of the areas of Atlanta, Georgia, southwestern Pennsylvania, Miami, Florida, Detroit, Michigan, and Sacramento, California".

On page 11, line 19, strike "\$43,200,000" and insert "\$40,700,000".

WELLSTONE AMENDMENT NO. 1789

Mr. WELLSTONE proposed an amendment to the bill, H.R. 2684, *supra*; as follows:

On page 17, between lines 14 and 15, insert the following:

SEC. 108. (a) FINDINGS.—The Senate makes the following findings:

(1) One of the most outrageous examples of the failure of the Federal Government to honor its obligations to veterans involves the so-called "atomic veterans", patriotic Americans who were exposed to radiation at Hiroshima and Nagasaki and at nuclear test sites.

(2) For more than 50 years, many atomic veterans have been denied veterans compensation for diseases, known as radiogenic diseases, that the Department of Veterans Affairs recognizes as being linked to exposure to radiation. Many of these diseases are lethal forms of cancer.

(3) The Department of Veterans Affairs almost invariably denies the claims for com-

ensation of atomic veterans on the grounds that the radiation doses received by such veterans were too low to result in radiogenic disease, even though many scientists and former Under Secretary for Health Kenneth Kizer agree that the dose reconstruction analyses conducted by the Department of Defense are unreliable.

(4) Although the Department of Veterans Affairs already has a list of radiogenic diseases that are presumed to be service-connected, the Department omits three diseases—lung cancer, colon cancer, and central nervous system cancer—from that list, notwithstanding the agreement of scientists that the evidence of a link between the three diseases and low-level exposure to radiation is very convincing and, in many cases, is stronger than the evidence of a link between such exposure and other radiogenic diseases currently on that list.

(b) SENSE OF SENATE.—It is the sense of the Senate that lung cancer, colon cancer, and brain and central nervous system cancer should be added to the list of radiogenic diseases that are presumed by the Department of Veterans Affairs to be service-connected disabilities.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, be allowed to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, September 23, 1999. The purpose of this meeting will be to (1) to examine the impact of electronic trading on regulation and (2) to consider the nominations of Paul Riddick to be Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Administration and Andrew Fish to be Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Congressional Relations.

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

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, September 23, 1999, to conduct a mark-up on the committee print of the Export Administration Act and pending nominations.

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

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources be granted permission to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, September 23, for purposes of conducting a full committee hearing entitled "Y2K—Will the Lights Go Out," which is scheduled to begin at 9:30 a.m. The purpose of this hearing is to explore the potential consequences of the year 2000 computer problem to the Nation's supply of electricity.

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

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the full Committee on Environment and Public Works be granted permission to conduct a nominations hearing Thursday, September 23, 3 p.m., Hearing Room (SD-406), to receive testimony from the following: Dr. Richard A. Meserve, nominated by the President to be a Member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission; Dr. Paul L. Hill, Jr., to be Member and Chairperson of the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board; and Major General Phillip R. Anderson, U.S. Army, to be a Member and President, Mr. Sam Epstein Angel, to be a Member, and Brigadier General Robert H. Griffin, U.S. Army, to be a Member, of the Mississippi River Commission.

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

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, September 23, 1999, at 3:30 pm to hold a hearing.

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

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, the Committee on the Judiciary requests unanimous consent to conduct a mark-up on Thursday, September 23, 1999 beginning at 10 a.m. in Dirksen Room 226.

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

COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Rules and Administration be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, September 23, 1999 at 9 a.m. to continue the mark-up of S. Res. 172, a resolution to establish a special committee of the Senate to address the cultural crisis facing America.

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

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Select Committee on Intelligence be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, September 23, 1999 at 2 p.m. to hold a close hearing on intelligence matters.

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

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE YEAR 2000 TECHNOLOGY PROBLEM

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Special Committee on the Year 2000 Technology Problem be permitted to meet on September 23, 1999 at 9:30 a.m. for the purpose of conducting a hearing.