

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall take effect on October 1, 1999.

• Mr. ROBB. Mr. President, the men and women of the Armed Forces are being asked to do more and more with less and less, to the point where it is becoming difficult to recruit and retain the best and brightest. Looking at just two salient examples, last year the Navy's recruiting efforts fell short by over 7,000 sailors, and last year Air Force first-term aircrew reenlistment was only 61 percent.

To help meet these and other personnel challenges, the Armed Services Committee recently approved S. 4, the Soldiers', Sailors', Airmens' and Marines' Bill of Rights Act of 1999. S. 4 authorizes significant pay raises, improves retirement pay, and enhances GI Bill benefits. This legislation will be brought up soon for consideration by the full Senate. It is an important step—one of several—that the Congress must take this year to help the military pull out of what the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs described as a "nose-dive that might cause irreparable damage to this great force."

But I believe S. 4 missed some excellent opportunities to directly improve recruiting and retention—opportunities recognized by the Administration in their FY 2000 defense budget submission. In particular, certain categories of military service present our most difficult retention challenges because they involve recruiting highly skilled personnel, providing costly training, and retaining these individuals in the face of uniquely difficult and dangerous missions coupled with powerful financial incentives to leave the military for the civilian sector. Examples include aircrews, Navy SEALs, and Navy Surface Warfare Officers.

Only 25 percent of Surface Warfare Officers remain on active duty to their Department Head tour. In the Navy SEAL community, attrition has increased over 15 percent in the past three years. FY 1998 Navy diver manning was below 85 percent. That same year, only about 60 percent of military career linguists met or exceeded the minimum requirements in listening or reading proficiency. A host of retention problems exist for Nuclear-Qualified Officers.

This amendment which I am filing today along with Senator KENNEDY and Senator CLELAND does several things. It provides bonuses for Surface Warfare Officers and Navy SEALs to encourage them to remain in the service. It provides added pay for enlisted aircrews. Several existing bonuses are increased, including those for divers, Nuclear Qualified Officers, linguists and other critical specialties. Finally, the Enlistment Bonus Ceiling is increased. These are critical remedies for critical specialties. The nation simply can't afford to pay so much to recruit and train

these talented individuals only to see them leave the service out of frustration over the inadequacies of their pay and benefits.

Mr. President, I look forward to offering this amendment to S. 4 when it is taken up by the Senate. I also want to thank Senators CLELAND and KENNEDY for their help in developing this provision and for their unequivocal commitment to the uniformed personnel who serve our nation so ably. •

NOTICE OF HEARING

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I wish to announce that the Committee on Small Business will hold its Organizational Meeting for the 106th Congress on Friday, February 5, 1999, which will begin at 9 a.m. in room 428A of the Russell Senate Office Building.

Immediately following the organizational meeting, we will turn to official committee business including: (1) marking up and reporting out S. 314, Small Business Year 2000 Readiness Act; (2) marking up and reporting out of the Small Business Investment Company Technical Corrections Act of 1999; and (3) taking up the nomination of Phyllis Fong to be inspector general of the Small Business Administration.

For further information, please contact Emilia DiSanto or Paul Cooksey at 224-5175.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

• Mr. SARBANES. Mr. President, today I rise to express my support for S. 6, the Patients' Bill of Rights Act, a bill to guarantee all Americans with private health insurance, and particularly those in HMOs or other managed care plans, certain fundamental rights regarding their health care coverage.

Over the past decade, our health care system has changed dramatically. Today, approximately 161 million Americans receive medical coverage through some type of managed care organization. Regrettably, the change has had some unfortunate consequences. Many in managed care plans experience increasing restrictions on their choice of doctors, growing limitations on their access to necessary treatment, and an overriding emphasis on cost cutting at the expense of quality.

This shift to managed care, largely a response to rapidly increasing medical costs, has resulted in a health care system overly driven by the need to secure healthy profit margins. The impact these market forces have on the health care Americans receive must be moderated. Access to quality health care is an essential human need, and in a democratic society, it must be recognized as a fundamental right.

Our bill would guarantee basic patient protections to all consumers of private insurance. It would ensure that patients receive the treatment they have been promised and have paid for. This bill would prevent HMOs and other health plans from arbitrarily interfering with doctors' decisions regarding the treatment their patients require.

Our bill would restore patients' ability to trust that their health care practitioners advice is driven solely by health concerns, not cost concerns. HMOs and other health care plans would be prohibited from restricting which treatment options doctors may discuss with their patients. In addition, our bill would outlaw the use of financial incentives to reward doctors for cutting costs by recommending against potentially necessary treatments.

One of the most critical patient protections that would be provided under our bill is guaranteed access to emergency care. The Patients' Bill of Rights Act would ensure that patients could go to any emergency room during a medical emergency without calling their health plan for permission first. Emergency room doctors could stabilize the patient and focus on providing them the care they need without worrying about payment until after the emergency has subsided.

S. 6 would also ensure that health plans provide their customers with access to specialists when needed because of the complexity and seriousness of the patient's sickness. This provision is extremely important to ensure that persons suffering from serious, ongoing conditions, like cancer, have access to care by oncologists or other specialists.

Many managed care plans provide exemplary coverage for their members, including innovative preventive care benefits, because they recognize that it is more efficient to keep people healthy than to treat them after they become ill. Unfortunately, not all plans are administered with this philosophy. Many Americans, enrolled in poorly run plans, are not obtaining the care they need and are entitled to receive. The improved health of millions of Americans depends on the enactment of this bill. It will establish Federal requirements ensuring that private health care plans provide their members with a minimum level of coverage. I urge my colleagues to join me in strongly supporting, S. 6, the Patients' Bill of Rights. •

TRIBUTE TO MR. TOM NUTTING, 1998 MERRIMACK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BUSINESS OF THE YEAR RECIPIENT

• Mr. SMITH of New Hampshire. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Tom Nutting, the recipient of the "Business of the Year Award" from the Merrimack Chamber of Commerce.