the Federal Employees Health Benefits program established under chapter 89 of title 5.

''(b) PORTABILITY OF BENEFITS.—The Secretary of Defense shall provide that any covered beneficiary enrolled in the TRICARE program may receive benefits under that program at facilities that provide benefits under that program throughout the various regions of that program.

''(c) PATIENT MANAGEMENT.—(1) The Secretary of Defense shall, to the maximum extent practicable, minimize the authorization or certification requirements imposed upon covered beneficiaries under the TRICARE program as a condition of access to benefits under that program.

''(2) The Secretary of Defense shall, to the maximum extent practicable, utilize practices for processing claims under the TRICARE program that are similar to the best industry practices for processing claims for health care services in a simplified and expedited manner. To the maximum extent practicable, such practices shall include electronic processing of claims.

''(d) REIMBURSEMENT OF HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS.—(1) Subject to paragraph (2), the Secretary of Defense may increase the reimbursement provided to health care providers under the TRICARE program above the reimbursement otherwise authorized such providers under that program if the Secretary determines that such increase is necessary in order to ensure the availability of an adequate number of qualified health care providers under that program.

''(2) The amount of reimbursement provided under paragraph (1) with respect to a health care service may not exceed the lesser of—

''(A) the amount equal to the local usual and customary charge for the service in the service area (as determined by the Secretary) in which the service is provided; or

''(B) the amount equal to 115 per cent of the CHAMPUS maximum allowable charge for the service.

''(e) AUTHORITY FOR CERTAIN THIRD-PARTY COLLECTIONS.—(1) A medical treatment facility of the uniformed services under the TRICARE program may collect from a third-party payer the reasonable charges for health care services described in paragraph (2) that are incurred by the facility on behalf of a covered beneficiary under that program to the extent that the beneficiary would be eligible to receive reimbursement or indemnification from the third-party payer if the beneficiary were to incur such charges on the beneficiary's own behalf.

''(2) The reasonable charges described in this paragraph are reasonable charges for services or care covered by the medicare program under title XVIII of the Social Security Act.

''(3) The collection of charges, and the utilization of amounts collected, under this subsection shall be subject to the provisions of section 1095 of this title. The term 'reasonable costs', as used in that section shall be deemed for purposes of the application of that section to this subsection to refer to the reasonable charges described in paragraph (2).

''(f) CONSULTATION.—The Secretary of Defense shall carry out any actions under this section after consultation with the other administering Secretaries.''.

(2) The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 55 of such title is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 1097a the following new item:

''1097b. TRICARE: comparability of benefits with benefits under Federal Employees Health Benefits program; other requirements and authorities.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall take effect one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(c) REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION.—(1) Not later than 6 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense, in consultation with the other administering Secretaries, shall submit to Congress a report assessing the effects of the implementation of the requirements and authorities set forth in section 1097b of title 10, United States Code (as added by subsection (a)).

(2) The report shall include the following:

(A) An assessment of the cost of the implementation of such requirements and authorities.

(B) An assessment whether or not the implementation of any such requirements and authorities will result in the utilization by the TRICARE program of the best industry practices with respect to the matters covered by such requirements and authorities.

(3) In this subsection, the term ''administering Secretaries'' has the meaning given that term in section 1072(3) of title 10, United States Code.

(d) INAPPLICABILITY OF REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—The reports required by section 401 shall not address the amendments made by subsection (a).

SARBANES (AND OTHERS) AMENDMENT NO. 19

Mr. SARBANES (for himself, Mr. WARNER, Mr. ROBB, and Ms. MIKULSKI) proposed an amendment to the bill, S. 4, supra; as follows:

On page 28, between lines 8 and 9, insert the following:

SEC. 104. SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING PARITY BETWEEN ADJUSTMENTS IN MILITARY AND CIVIL SERVICE PAY.

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

(1) Members of the uniformed services of the United States and civilian employees of the United States make significant contributions to the general welfare of the United States.

(2) Increases in the levels of pay of members of the uniformed services and of civilian employees of the United States have not kept pace with increases in the overall levels of pay of workers in the private sector so that there is now up to a 30 percent gap between the compensation levels of Federal civilian employees and the compensation levels of private sector workers and a 9 to 14 percent gap between the compensation levels of members of the uniformed services and the compensation levels of private sector workers.

(3) In almost every year of the past two decades, there have been equal adjustments in the compensation of members of the uniformed services and the compensation of civilian employees of the United States.

(b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that there should continue to be parity between the adjustments in the compensation of members of the uniformed services and the adjustments in the compensation of civilian employees of the United States.

NOTICE OF HEARING

COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to announce that the Committee on Rules and Administration will meet on Thursday, February 25, 1999 at 9:30 a.m. in Room SR–301 Russell Senate Office Building, to conduct the Committee's organizational meeting for the 106th Congress.

For further information concerning this meeting, please contact Lory Breneman at the Rules Committee on 4–0281.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS

Mr. ALLARD. 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 Tuesday, February 23, 1999, to conduct an oversight hearing on monetary policy report to Congress pursuant to the Full Employment and Balanced Growth Act of 1978. The witness will be: Hon. Alan Greenspan, Chairman, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. Chairman Greenspan, will also give testimony on financial services modernization legislation.

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

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee be authorized to meet on Tuesday, February 23, 1999, at 9:30 am on S. 303, Satellite Home Viewers Act.

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

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, the Finance Committee requests unanimous consent to conduct a hearing on Tuesday, February 23, 1999 beginning at 10:00 a.m. in room 215 Dirksen.

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

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, be authorized to meet for a hearing on Education Reform: Governors' Views during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, February 23, 1999, at 8:30 am.

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

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RULES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

• Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, pursuant to paragraph 2 of Rule XXVI of