

Georgia, Senator CLELAND, as an amendment to H.R. 3412, the "Year 2000 Readiness and Small Business Programs Restructuring and Reform Act of 1998." H.R. 3412 passed the Senate on September 30, 1998; however, the House of Representatives was not able to consider the bill before Congress adjourned last fall.

As the Chairman of Appropriations Subcommittee on VA, HUD and Independent Agencies, I have been concerned about our Nation's disaster relief program. I have worked at length with FEMA Director Witt and other Administration officials over the past several years to address the escalating costs of disaster relief and the need to tighten up this program. Since 1989, we have spent \$25 billion on FEMA disaster relief, and there remains more than \$2.6 billion in anticipated costs associated with open disasters. Much work needs to be accomplished to tighten the criteria for declaring disasters and eligibility for disaster relief funding, as well as stronger insurance requirements, so that we can bring these ever-escalating costs under control.

One way to mitigate against future disaster losses is to undertake preventive measures. Preventive measures to mitigate against future disaster losses, rather than the current strategy of response and recovery, could save as much as 50 percent of projected disaster relief loan costs.

S. 388 would create the Disaster Mitigation Pilot Program, which will permit SBA to establish a pilot program using up to \$15 million of disaster loans annually from FY 2000-2004 to provide small businesses located in disaster prone areas with low interest, long-term disaster loans to finance preventive measures to mitigate against future disaster losses. The pilot program would operate in disaster prone areas designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). FEMA has launched "Project Impact," which emphasizes emergency preparedness, in response to the problem of increased costs and personal devastation caused by repeated natural disasters. I continue to have concerns about the criteria under Project Impact and urge FEMA to work to strengthen the criteria. I expect that SBA will develop the appropriate criteria for this new loan program that is consistent with FEMA's efforts to make improvements in this area. In the end, I do not believe we should have a proliferation of independent mitigation programs housed in numerous Federal agencies, and we should be working to develop a cohesive national strategy to deliver disaster relief assistance.

Under current law, SBA disaster loans may be used for mitigation purposes only to the extent that includes repairing or replacing existing protective devices that are destroyed or dam-

aged in an area that has recently suffered a natural disaster. In addition, up to 20 percent of the disaster loan amount may be used to install new mitigation devices that will prevent future damage. Under S. 388, the Disaster Mitigation Pilot Program, a small business borrower would be allowed to use 100 percent of an SBA disaster loan for disaster mitigation purposes within an area designated by FEMA.

Mr. President, S. 388, the Disaster Mitigation Pilot Program, makes sense. It is a worthy program that needs to be tested, and I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this bill.●

#### OPEN-MARKET REORGANIZATION FOR THE BETTERMENT OF INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT

● Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I rise to comment on the issue of international satellite reform. First I want to thank Senator BURNS for holding this important hearing. International satellite reform is critical to consumers across the United States.

Yesterday I agreed to become a cosponsor of this bill—along with Senators BURNS, MCCAIN, BRYAN, BROWNBACK, CLELAND, FRIST and DORGAN. I support Senator BURNS' bill because I believe that it is in the consumer interest to have a private INTELSAT. Such a competitive entity will lead to lower prices, better service, and more efficiency across the globe.

Additionally, removing ownership restrictions on COMSAT will help to bring new services to American consumers. I believe that broadband satellite services will play a very important role in West Virginia's future, and this bill will lead to further deployment of these services by lifting the ownership restriction on COMSAT. I am excited by the possibility of a new competitor in domestic satellite services, and the resulting advances in these satellite services. Our mountainous terrain and the high cost of providing traditional telecommunications services make satellite services particularly important to West Virginia.

Furthermore, INTELSAT has a history of serving all parts of the world at reasonable prices. We have an interest in making sure that developing nations are part of the global information infrastructure. I will work to make sure that this bill will allow a privatized INTELSAT to continue to serve these areas at reasonable prices.

I must state, however, that while I support this bill, we are still in the middle of the legislative process. I am eager to continue working with Senators HOLLINGS, BREAUX, and other Senators who are working on important ideas with great promise. I want to stress that while I agree that this bill is the right platform for inter-

national satellite reform, I intend to keep working hard on this issue.●

#### NATIONAL INHALANTS AND POISONS AWARENESS WEEK

● Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I rise today to express my support for increasing public awareness about the dangers of inhalant abuse. I am proud to be a cosponsor of S. Res. 47, recently passed by the Senate, which designates this week as "National Inhalants and Poisons Awareness Week."

Our nation's drug control policy correctly places emphasis upon finding solutions for combating the illegal sale, manufacture and trafficking of well-known abused substances such as cocaine and methamphetamine. However, I believe Congress and the President should do more to focus attention on an emerging but equally dangerous threat—inhalant abuse.

As my colleagues may know, inhalant abuse is the intentional breathing of gas or vapors for the purpose of reaching a high. Most people are familiar with common household products such as furniture polish, paint thinner, glue, felt tip markers, and deodorants. However, many families are not aware of how misuse of these inhalants by children can result in sickness or death.

Far too often, these inhalants have caused heart, brain, and liver damage in thousands of children across the country. Sadly, many children have died as a result of inhalant abuse, a condition known as Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome. In 1990, four young people in my home state of Minnesota died in separate incidents after experimenting with inhalants. Continued misuse of these products may also lead to additional illicit drug use.

Additionally, the National Institute on Drug Abuse reported in 1996 that one in five American teenagers have used inhalants to get high. Over the last few years, our nation has witnessed an increase in new inhalant abusers from 382,000 in 1991 to an estimated 805,000 in 1996. In my view, these troubling trends can be reversed by educating the public about the dangers of this abuse and encouraging communities to develop effective treatment and prevention programs.

In my view, greater awareness of inhalant abuse can best be achieved through passage of S. 609, legislation introduced by Senator FRANK MURKOWSKI that would amend the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1994 to include inhalant abuse among the Act's definition of "substance abuse." Passage of this bill will give Minnesota and other states the opportunity to develop federally-funded inhalant abuse prevention and education programs. Importantly, these programs will be based on the active involvement of parents, teachers and