

sections 1816(c)(2)(B)(i) and 1842(c)(2)(B)(i) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395h(c)(2)(B)(i) and 1395u(c)(2)(B)(i)) so that a provider of services, physician, or supplier may immediately provide the beneficiary with a written explanation of medical benefits, including an explanation of costs and coverage to any beneficiary under parts A and B at the point of care;

(G) allows for electronic payment of claims to each provider of services, physician, and supplier, including payment through electronic funds transfer, for each claim for which payment is not made on a periodic interim payment basis under section 1815(e)(2) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 1395g(e)(2)) for items and services furnished under part A;

(H) complies with all applicable transactions standards adopted by the Secretary under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996;

(I) provides for system specifications that are flexible, modular in nature, scalable, and performance-based; and

(J) is designed to be used, or easily adapted for use, in other health insurance programs administered by a department or agency of the United States.

(3) Not later than one year after the date the Commission submits the initial report under paragraph (2), the Commission shall submit to Congress (and shall publish in the Federal Register) a final report on the Secretary's progress in developing an advanced informational system.

(4) Each report required under this subsection—

(A) shall include those recommendations, findings, and conclusions of the Commission that receive the approval of at least a majority of the members of the Commission; and

(B) shall include dissenting or additional views of members of the Commission with respect to the subject matter of the report.

(c) MEMBERSHIP.—

(1) COMPOSITION.—The Commission shall be composed of 13 voting members appointed in accordance with paragraph (2) and two ex officio voting members designated under paragraph (3).

(2) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, members of the Commission shall be appointed as follows:

(A) The Director of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency shall appoint one member.

(B) The Director of the National Science Foundation shall appoint one member.

(C) The Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy shall appoint one member.

(D) The Secretary shall appoint one member who represents each of the following:

(i) Physicians and other health care practitioners.

(ii) Hospitals.

(iii) Skilled nursing facilities.

(iv) Home health agencies.

(v) Suppliers of durable medical equipment.

(vi) Fiscal intermediaries and carriers.

(E) The Secretary shall appoint two members who represent information technology providers, one who represents medicare information technology providers and one who represent health industry information technology providers.

(F) The Secretary shall appoint two members who represent medicare beneficiaries.

(3) EX OFFICIO MEMBERS.—The following shall serve as ex officio members of the Commission:

(A) The Secretary, who shall be the chairperson of the Commission.

(B) The Chief Financial Officer of the Health Care Financing Administration.

(4) QUALIFICATIONS.—Each of the members appointed under paragraph (2) shall be knowledgeable in advanced information technology, financial management, or electronic billing procedures associated with health care benefit programs. One of the members appointed under paragraph (2)(F) shall have expertise in health information privacy.

(d) MEETINGS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Commission shall meet at the call of the chairperson, except that it shall meet—

(A) not less than four times each year; or

(B) on the written request of a majority of its members.

(2) QUORUM.—A majority of the members of the Commission shall constitute a quorum, but a lesser number of members may hold hearings.

(e) COMPENSATION.—Each member of the Commission who is a full-time officer or employee of the United States may not receive additional pay, allowances, or benefits by reason of their service on the Commission. Each member of the Commission shall receive travel expenses and per diem in lieu of subsistence in accordance with sections 5702 and 5703 of title 5, United States Code.

(f) STAFF.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The chairperson of the Commission may, without regard to the civil service laws and regulations, appoint an executive director and such other additional personnel as may be necessary to enable the Commission to perform its duties.

(2) COMPENSATION.—The chairperson of the Commission may fix the compensation of the executive director and other personnel without regard to the provisions of chapter 51 and subchapter III of chapter 53 of title 5, United States Code, relating to classification of positions and General Schedule pay rates, except that the rate of pay for the executive director and other personnel may not exceed the rate payable for level V of the Executive Schedule under section 5316 of such title.

(3) DETAIL OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES.—Upon request of the chairperson, the head of any Federal department or agency may detail to the Commission, without reimbursement, basis, any of the personnel of that department or agency to the Commission to assist it in carrying out its duties under this Act. Such detail shall be without interruption or loss of civil service status or privilege.

(g) PROCUREMENT OF TEMPORARY AND INTERMITTENT SERVICES.—The chairperson of the Commission may procure temporary and intermittent services under section 3109(b) of title 5, United States Code, at rates for individuals which do not exceed the daily equivalent of the annual rate of basic pay prescribed for level V of the Executive Schedule under section 5316 of such title.

(h) TERMINATION.—The Commission shall terminate on the date that is 60 days after the date the Commission submits to Congress the final report under subsection (b)(3).

(i) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—There are authorized to be appropriated out of any funds in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, such sums as may be necessary for the Commission to carry out its duties under this section.

(2) AVAILABILITY.—Any sums appropriated under paragraph (1) shall remain available until the termination of the Commission under subsection (h).

(j) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

(2) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term “Administrator” means the Administrator of the Health Care Financing Administration.

(k) APPLICABILITY OF FACA.—The provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.) shall apply to the Commission.

SEC. 3. IMPLEMENTATION OF SYSTEM.

(a) ANNUAL REPORTS ON IMPLEMENTATION.—Not later than 6 months after the Commission publishes in the Federal Register the final report required under section 2(b)(3) and annually thereafter until the date of final implementation under subsection (b), the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the progress of the Health Care Financing Administration on implementing a modernized advanced, integrated informational infrastructure for the administration of parts A and B of the medicare program.

(b) FINAL IMPLEMENTATION.—Not later than 10 years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall fully implement a modernized advanced, integrated informational infrastructure for the administration of parts A and B of the medicare program.

SEC. 4. ADMINISTRATIVE SIMPLIFICATION.

Section 1173(a) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1320d-2(a)) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(4) INTERACTIVE TRANSACTIONS.—If the Secretary adopts a batch standard for a transaction under paragraph (1) that involves a health care provider, not later than 24 months after the adoption of the batch standard, the Secretary shall also adopt an interactive standard that is compatible with the batch standard so that the provider may immediately complete the transaction at the point of service.”.

CONGRESS STILL WORKING FOR BETTERMENT OF NATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. GILCREST) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GILCREST. Mr. Speaker, we are here Thursday evening, and we all know that we are going to be here tomorrow, Friday. What I would like to tell my colleagues, all of them on both sides of the aisle, is that we are here to continue the process of legislating.

Some of the things that we are trying to work out here, one, for example, is to provide health care prescription drugs for Americans that need that service and do not have it right now.

We are working to create a system where no legal immigrants are turned away from our shores. We are working to ensure worker safety and much-needed, in certain circumstances, compensation for those who are injured in a variety of ways.

We are working to build schools for those municipalities around the country that need new construction. We are working to enhance the economy by stimulating productivity in the private sector. Some of that is by a tax structure. Some of that is opening new markets overseas.

We are working here, Mr. Speaker, to find ways to make this great country energy independent. We are working here, specifically what we will do tomorrow is to ensure that the environment is clean and sustainable.

Now, how do we do all those things while we are here working? Well, it is pretty fundamental. We as Members of Congress, both the Democrats and Republicans, and the two Independents, we come here every day, we exchange information. There is a sense of tolerance for somebody else's opinion. Then we vote. If you get 218 votes, you have the majority. Our fundamental democratic process is based on the majority. So if we have 218 votes, then that bill is passed out of the House and goes over to the Senate.

We hear a lot about gridlock and partisan politics, both here on the House floor and in the media, certainly. Well, I am here to say that partisan politics is actually the strength of our system. That means each of us is allowed to come here and express our deeply felt convictions without fear of any retribution or retaliation.

When we stand here and disagree with the Democrats or Republicans disagree with Republicans, or Republicans disagree with the President, that is the strength of our Nation, which is the diversity of thought.

Now, one cannot express one's difference of opinion in Cuba. One cannot express one's difference of opinion in Iraq to Saddam Hussein because one would disappear and never be seen again. But here on the House floor, the fundamentals of democratic process is that every individual Member of Congress, whether one is the Speaker or a new freshman, has an opportunity to be a responsible advocate for what one believes. If one can talk to 218 Members, and they see one as credible and one has the right information, then one will get their vote, and one's bill will pass.

So the strength of our country is that we each have the availability to us, because of our Constitution, to express our heartfelt convictions.

There is one other thing that we need to do here on a regular basis, but especially now before this general election, is to tap the energy of the American people with all their diversity and their initiative and innovation. We need to inspire the American people to participate in the democratic process so that all of us collectively together can make the possibilities for this Nation and this world limitless.

PUTTING PEOPLE ABOVE POLITICS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PRITS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. KINGSTON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, we are joined here tonight by the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. HAYWORTH) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT). What we want to talk about is what we have tried to do in our individual careers, and we believe that this Congress has, and that is putting people above politics.

See, when we were elected in Arizona, in Minnesota, and, in my case, Georgia, we did not go out there and say I am going to be a Republican, and I am going to only be a Republican and I am going to only represent Republicans. We went out there to say the American people want a change. We are going to try to put people above politics. We are going to try to stick to that.

Do my colleagues know what, I have found that a lot of times in these negotiations, the Democrats have a lot of good things to offer. What we try to do is put the best of the Democratic ideas and the best of the Republican ideas forward for the best for the American people.

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That is one reason why we are still here in Washington after the Senate has already adjourned. It is one reason we are still here to fight for the things that we believe in. It would be a lot more convenient for us during this election time to be back home pounding the streets in our own districts, but there are some things that we need to fight for.

My wife, Libby, often reminds me that she does not mind driving the car pool alone and being alone at parties and taking care of the kids and sitting down at the dinner table and seeing my empty chair night after night if I am here to make a difference.

But if I am not making a difference and it is politics as usual, then it is time to go home. But so far we are here to put people before politics.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. HAYWORTH).

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Georgia for yielding.

As he mentioned his beloved spouse, Ms. Libby, my thoughts turn to home and Ms. Mary and a conversation that my bride, Mary, and I had just last night.

This is a great honor to serve in the Congress of the United States. Evoking the memories of one who served at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue before coming here, John Quincy Adams, he was heard to say, "There is no greater honor than serving in the people's house."

And so, Mr. Speaker, I think back to my conversation last night with Mary when she said, honey, we would love to have you at home. The kids have spelling tests. There is a lot going on. But you and the other Members of Congress

need to stay there and complete the work you were sent to do. And as is often the case, Mary provides good advice, the kind of common sense that comes from Main Street, America, that may be disrupted in the Beltway and with the pundits and with the dominant media culture always ready to play a game of gotcha, especially now, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the calendar and see what approaches.

Fast approaching is the first Tuesday following the first Monday, election day, where our constituents, where citizens across America will make a choice. Conventional wisdom, our friends in the fourth estate, indeed our friends on the other side of the aisle, albeit sotto voce, from the other side of the aisle, say, we need to be at home. But the fact is we are here and here we will remain to put people before politics, to complete our work, to understand there are legitimate differences between people of the two major parties and those independents who join us here.

Mr. Speaker, I also think, in a sense, being entrusted with this role is not unlike applying for a job. And I have yet to take a job application and find a place to fill out partisan identification. I never see a spot on the resume or on a job application which asks whether you are a Republican or a Democrat or an Independent.

So putting partisanship aside, I think it is important for every Member who can possibly be here to return to this Chamber. And that is why I noted with great dismay tonight, as we cast the vote to make sure our Government was funded for another day, our friend the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT), who happens to be the leader of the Democratic party in this Chamber, chose to be out campaigning in Missouri.

Mr. Speaker, how sad it is also that the President of the United States, who a week ago informed the Senate majority leader that due to a fund-raiser in New York, he would be unavailable for consultation until after 1 o'clock in the morning, followed the next day by a round of golf and going in person to the final game of the World Series, he would be unavailable for consultation, now that same President of the United States finds himself not in the resplendent White House but instead 3,000 miles to the west in California out campaigning.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues, let us make this very clear. The President of the United States is not our campaigner in chief, he is the commander in chief. He is the Chief Executive. And we should expect nothing less of our President than his presence here in Washington to achieve a hard-won consensus and compromise.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, it is ironic, and I am not trying to give anyone a geography lesson, but it is interesting that here we are in Washington,