

jump-start Medicare reform, provide meaningful relief for the Nation's older people and their families, while addressing the solvency question and the need for an approach to be consistent with long-term Medicare reform.

We have improved on what is being discussed in the House because they do not have the same focus on solvency. I am very much looking forward—as we bring that legislation to the floor of the Senate and it goes to conference and the work in the Finance Committee—to continue the progress we saw this morning.

Suffice it to say, there were a number of moments today when it was likely that it was all going to break down. Had the Budget Committee reported a significantly smaller sum than was finally agreed on, had we not made the kind of changes in the Snow-Wyden-Smith amendment, we might not have been able to reach a bipartisan agreement on prescription drugs this year in the Congress. As a result of what happened today in the Budget Committee and the important work that was done on a bipartisan basis, we have laid the foundation for making sure that before this Congress adjourns and goes home for the year, we have acted to help the Nation's older people.

For all of those seniors and for all the families who are walking an economic tightrope, balancing their food costs against their fuel bills and their fuel bills against their medical bills, my admonition this afternoon is that we have a long way to go, but today we really made progress.

Today, as a result of bipartisan work, we have an opportunity to ensure that by fall, on or before September 1, as the amendment adopted in the Budget Committee requires, we have a proposal that is bipartisan, that is one which provides meaningful relief for older people, that is voluntary, offers universal coverage, and is consistent with long-term Medicare reform. We can have that kind of proposal on the floor of the Senate this fall.

For the millions of seniors and families who are watching the Congress and looking to see if we can deliver on this issue, progress was made today. I particularly commend Senator SNOWE and Senator SMITH. Senator SMITH made a very constructive suggestion towards the end of the markup when we had a debate about when the Budget Committee was seeking a product from the Finance Committee. Senator SMITH offered a very constructive suggestion. If we can continue to build on that bipartisan progress, we can get this job done.

I believe—and I will wrap up with this—this country can no longer afford to deny coverage for senior citizens' prescription needs under Medicare. I use those words deliberately. People ask if we can afford to offer the coverage. I am of the view that we cannot

afford not to offer this coverage because the revolution in American health care is about these new medicines that help people stay well.

I have pointed out repeatedly that one can spend \$1,000 or \$1,500 on anticoagulant medicines that help prevent strokes and can stop a stroke that costs more than \$100,000.

Today, we made very significant progress in ensuring that no longer does the revolution in American health care bypass the Medicare program. I look forward to defending what was done in the Budget Committee on prescription drugs on the floor of the Senate when we get to the budget and working with the Finance Committee. Senators MOYNIHAN and ROTH have been very gracious in assuring there will be an opportunity for colleagues in both parties to contribute and offer their ideas and suggestions.

If we can continue to build on the progress that was made today in the Budget Committee, we will get this done, and we will get it done before the end of this session. In my view, this will revolutionize American health care and provide meaningful relief to older people and their families.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BENNETT). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### LAUNCHING OUR COMMUNITIES' ACCESS TO LOCAL TELEVISION ACT OF 2000—Continued

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, many of us worked very hard last year to reauthorize and update the Satellite Home Viewer Act.

Our principle accomplishment was to authorize satellite carriers to provide local television stations to their subscribers. This change has already spurred enormous growth in the satellite industry and is providing growing competition to the cable industry.

Unfortunately, the satellite providers—Echostar and DirecTV—made it very clear that their business plans did not contemplate serving rural areas. They were very busy, and they were very upfront in telling us that they were focusing their energies on the top 40 television markets.

So it was clear to Senators like myself who represent rural States that local-into-local was not going to be a reality unless we took additional action to encourage coverage for the 50 percent of the population that could watch the service being offered in television ads, but couldn't pick up the phone and order it.

We still see a lot of “not available in Alaska and Hawaii” fine print on advertisements.

They plagued us during telephone days, and now they are plaguing us in this period of rapid extension of new technology.

That is where the idea was born to provide loan guarantees to help make this service more available to more Americans.

All of us owe Senator CONRAD BURNS a debt of gratitude for pushing this issue so hard and for drafting the measure that was included in last year's satellite bill. That provision was dropped.

While it was unfortunate that this provision was removed from the final bill, I am pleased that it is here today, albeit in another form.

It is my hope the Senate will move quickly to adopt this measure and will resist accepting amendments that would threaten its ultimate enactment.

I thank the Chair and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

#### SENATOR TED STEVENS— ALASKAN OF THE CENTURY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I wish to say a couple of words about one of my oldest and best friends in the Senate, the senior Senator from Alaska, Mr. STEVENS.

Last week, Senator STEVENS was named “Alaskan of the Century.” Most of us feel pretty fortunate if we get named for the day, or possibly for the week, and sometimes even the month in our States. He was named “Alaskan of the Century.”

Well, my good friend, TED STEVENS, deserves that. He has a way about him, as we all know. He keeps me humble. I might talk about the hardships of a cold winter day in Vermont. But then I see his eyebrows go up when he explains to me that 40 degrees below zero is just beginning to get nippy—it gets to 75 below in Fairbanks. At that point, I know I am beat.

TED STEVENS is a tireless legislator, a respected leader. He helped create the State of Alaska. How many of us could actually say something like that? He actually helped create a State with his tireless work and brought it into the Union. He did this having already served his country in so many

ways. He was in the Air Force in World War II, served as a U.S. attorney in Fairbanks, and was also an Alaskan State representative. And this was on top of so many other things he has done. Today, of course, he serves with great distinction as one of the three most senior Members of the Senate and chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Senator STEVENS has consistently been a leader for our Nation's defense issues and has chaired the Senate Rules Committee, Governmental Affairs Committee, and Ethics Committee among others.

Senator STEVENS and I have served together for a long time. As members of the Appropriations Committee, both of us have worked to find economic opportunities for the rural communities that so many states, including our own, share. TED and I have also worked together through some of this Nation's most challenging times. During the divisive days of the impeachment trial, Senator STEVENS and I were chosen to fly to Jordan together as representatives of one, united Senate mourning the death of King Hussein.

Senator STEVENS is also a strong proponent of Title 9 and women's equality in sports. In fact, just this year he sponsored the Women in Sports Awards luncheon where Monica Seles was honored for her excellence on tennis courts throughout the world. I am sure that TED, an avid tennis player, tried to set up a game with her himself.

While he is unquestionably a great legislator, Senator STEVENS is also a proud father of six children and has a beautiful wife, Catherine. Senator STEVENS is an accomplished man with whom I am proud to serve in this United States Congress. Alaska, land of the aurora borealis and the Midnight Sun, has every reason to be proud of its senior Senator and this award shows Alaskans' gratitude and respect for his tireless work.

TED, congratulations on your well-deserved recognition as Alaskan of the Century.

TED and his wife, Catherine, have long been friends of myself and my wife, Marcelle. I consider him very much a member of the old school—when he gives his word, that is it; go to the bank with it.

I have seen several pieces of complex and important legislation go through this body because TED STEVENS gave his word they would go through—a word that he never broke with either Republican or Democrat. That is why TED STEVENS has gained so much respect.

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LAUNCHING OUR COMMUNITIES' ACCESS TO LOCAL TELEVISION ACT OF 2000—Continued

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I was a conferee last year on the satellite tele-

vision bill. I worked very hard, along with a number of my colleagues, to put in a provision that would have ensured the benefits of this bill would be shared by rural America through a loan guarantee program.

I appreciate the work of the Banking Committee under the leadership of Senator GRAMM and Senator SARBANES to report out a bill which provides a strong framework in which to move forward with this program.

I appreciate the majority leader, Senator LOTT, and the Democratic leader, Senator DASCHLE, who worked out an agreement with the committee leadership that put the bill before the Senate today.

Senator MAX BAUCUS of Montana introduced legislation with me last year. He has now joined with me on some very constructive amendments which I hope can be accepted.

I am here today to stand with rural America. I am proud to be a son of rural America. I know that oftentimes the needs of this special part of our Nation must be heard on the Senate floor.

I am not trying to change the main thrust or the intent of this committee-reported bill. My amendments don't alter the structure of the bill. My amendments simply say that I want the board, which will have the job of approving these loan guarantees for local-into-local television, to look at one thing. If we are going to have loan guarantees for local-into-local television, we should give additional consideration to the projects that can provide high-speed Internet access and emergency Weather Service reports to rural America.

If rural America is going to have high-speed Internet access, it is going to have to rely on satellite service; cable companies are not going to put wire out for it. For most of those parts of the country, they are not going to have the kind of fiber optics that might do it. But they can do it with satellite service.

I hope we will not allow a digital divide between urban America and rural America. Give us the special access through the satellite system.

For example, say the board that is going to do the loan guarantees has two equally balanced satellite systems that might give the same level of service, and at about the same cost, but one would offer high-speed Internet access to rural families; I say give that one the loan guarantee.

In America, there is a growing disparity between the digital haves and have-nots as portions of our society get left behind at the same lightning pace at which Internet develops. Our amendment closes this digital divide.

Having broadband, especially in rural areas, can provide opportunities to the handicapped, to the elderly, to education, and everyone, along with business opportunities and entertainment.

Whether you are sitting on the dirt road at my home in Middlesex, VT, whether you are out in rural Utah, or whether you are in rural California, it means you can have the same kind of Internet business, the same kind of access to information, and the same kind of access to educational opportunities.

My amendment would ensure that as long as the loan guarantee is to be made, the high-speed Internet access ought to be financed under the loan guarantee program, if there is excess capacity.

All we say is, before the board gives a satellite company a loan guarantee to provide rural satellite service, ask, first and foremost, Will you provide high-speed Internet access for the people in rural America? If you do, you have a better chance of being supported.

I want to provide a little history on this matter. A provision which we offered to conferees last year would have provided up to \$1.25 billion in loan guarantees to help finance the delivery of local broadcast stations to rural America. I pushed for that amendment because certain satellite companies were concerned that they could not cost-efficiently provide "local-into-local" satellite service to markets more rural than about the top 60 to 70 markets. That meant that bigger cities would get the local broadcast television service but that rural areas, by and large, would not.

Other Senators, not on the conference were also vitally interested in providing this service to rural America. I know that Senator BURNS and his key staffer on this issue Mike Rawson worked long and hard to get this language included in conference.

In addition, Senator BAUCUS introduced a bill which I cosponsored to address these rural concerns after efforts to include it in the conference report failed.

I do not want to be misunderstood, I want to point out that the leaders of the satellite industry—such as Charlie Ergen of EchoStar who is known for his creative and innovative ideas—want to provide this local service.

I want to congratulate Charlie Ergen for his recent partnership with iSKY which will offer consumers two-way wireless broadband access via satellite along with satellite television service. This broadband access will be 30 times faster than current dial-up speeds of 56k according to news accounts. Charlie has often been a leader in this arena and he has done it again.

I also want to point out that in Montana or my home state of Vermont, or in Alaska, or a Great Plains state, or elsewhere, receiving local broadcast television over satellite is more than entertainment.

Local television provides local weather, local news about emergencies, and local public affairs programming.