

Today, America's nuclear plants are now recognized as the significant assets they are, and the nuclear energy industry is more competitive than ever. In addition, several companies are testing an improved licensing process for new nuclear power plants.

Although Mr. Colvin is quick to acknowledge the accomplishments of others, his own work on behalf of the nuclear energy industry has paid enormous dividends. Through frequent testimony before congressional committees, conversations with senior Government officials and countless others, he has educated many about the value of nuclear energy and the promise it holds.

Hence, it is with mixed emotions that I wish Mr. Colvin, a great University of New Mexico Lobo, all the best in his retirement from the Nuclear Energy Institute. He has earned a well-deserved respite.

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#### PHARMACEUTICAL MARKET ACCESS AND FAIR TRADE ACT OF 2005

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the introduction of an important piece of legislation that will greatly aid Americans, both young and old, with their health care costs. I, along with a bipartisan group of Senators, have introduced the Pharmaceutical Market Access and Fair Trade Act of 2005. This legislation would provide much needed assistance for millions of Americans who are struggling to pay for their prescription drugs.

American consumers are currently charged 55 percent more, on average, for the same brand-name medicines sold in other major developed countries for a fraction of the price. The Pharmaceutical Market Access and Fair Trade Act of 2005 would allow American consumers to benefit from international price competition for prescription medicines through the reimportation of FDA-approved prescription drugs. This legislation allows U.S.-licensed pharmacies and drug wholesalers to import medications from Canada, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan and pass along the savings to their American customers. This approach would allow Americans to benefit from lower prices on their prescription drugs while still enabling them to use their local pharmacy. The bill also allows individual consumers to import prescription drugs for their own personal use.

One of the leading arguments against reimportation has been concerns over safety of the prescription drugs that are sold abroad. My colleagues and I have addressed this issue by providing strict safety measures in this legislation which are intended to guarantee that only safe, effective FDA-approved prescription drugs are imported. Such provisions would require pharmacies

and drug wholesalers to register with the FDA and be subject to frequent, random inspections. It would allow only the importation of FDA-approved medicines with a "chain of custody" that can be traced all the way back to an FDA-inspected manufacturing plant. It would provide for the use of the anticounterfeiting technology to identify safe, legal imported medicines, as well as give the FDA resources and authority it needs to ensure the safety of imported drugs and to stop those that are unsafe.

It is very important that the bill this Congress takes up and passes will not only become law but also ensure that reimportation is actually allowed to occur. This bill ensures that by including features to prevent a drug company from blocking importation by making subtle changes to a drug, such as changing the color or the place of manufacture, so that it is no longer FDA approved.

It is about time that the Senate takes up this legislation and passes it. It has broad bipartisan support and has been subjected to intense discussion, review, and debate. We are now faced with health care costs nationwide that are spiraling out of control, and we need to take action to address this issue. Allowing the safe reimportation of prescription drugs is a step in the right direction. The majority of the American people support reimportation, and I hope the leadership of this body will listen to them and finally provide the relief our citizens need.

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#### COMMISSION ON MEDICAID AND THE MEDICALLY UNDERSERVED

Mr. CHAFFEE. Mr. President, I am pleased to join Senator GORDON SMITH and others in the introduction of a bipartisan proposal that calls for the creation of a Commission on Medicaid and the Medically Underserved. This legislation recognizes the importance of assessing what aspects of the Medicaid program are working, which need reform, and how to improve service delivery and quality in the most cost effective manner possible. In this tight budget climate this bill highlights the need for a comprehensive assessment of the Medicaid program. The future of Medicaid cannot be determined by cost alone.

This Medicaid commission would be charged with numerous duties, including reviewing and making recommendations on long-term goals of the program, populations served, financial sustainability, interaction with Medicare and the uninsured, and the quality of care provided. Medicaid is a critically important program that helps meet the health care needs of a diverse population. Namely it serves as a source of traditional insurance for poor children and some of their parents, it pays for an acute and long term

care services for the elderly and disabled, wraps around coverage or assistance for low-income seniors and the disabled on Medicare, and serves as the primary source of funding for safety net providers serving Medicaid patients and the uninsured.

In recognition of the diverse population Medicaid serves, the Medicaid commission would be comprised of 23 members representing all the stakeholders in the Medicaid program. The commission has 1 year to hold public hearings, conduct evaluations and deliberations, and issue its report recommendations to the President, Congress and the public.

Like many of our Nation's governors, I agree that the Medicaid program needs a careful assessment with an eye toward reform that will make the program financially sustainable. At the same time, I recognize the importance of not fundamentally altering the structure of program without the deliberation necessary to preserve aspects of the program that are working. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting Senator SMITH's legislation to help bring Medicaid into the 21st century with reforms driven by efficacy, and not simply the cost of the program.

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#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

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#### HONORING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF WEST KENTUCKY COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

• Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, I pay tribute and congratulate West Kentucky Community and Technical College, WKCTC, as one of the finalists for the prestigious Bellwether Award presented by the Community College Futures Assembly. Their recent recognition has given Kentucky reason to be proud.

As one of eight national finalists, WKCTC is recognized for its Realtime Captioning Technology program. This program, which was originally funded by a \$475,000 Congressional award, creates a distance-learning format designed to greater prepare individuals for the workplace, while also providing broadcast captioning for the hearing-impaired. With over 28 million deaf and hearing-impaired Americans nationwide, I am sure that you will join me in recognizing the importance of providing such a service.

The Bellweather award was established in 1995 as integral part of the Community College Futures Assembly. This assembly primarily focuses on cutting-edge, trend setting programs, which often run the risk of being replaced at larger colleges.

I hope that you will join me today in both recognizing and congratulating West Kentucky Community Technical College in their recent achievement.