

Meeting the health care needs of these communities and villages is a daunting task. Residents have difficulty due to geography, lack of providers and poverty. Although excellent medical facilities and tertiary care centers are available in Anchorage, direct connection to these facilities from most of the State is not possible other than by air transportation. Consequently, geographically, 74 percent of the State is in medically underserved areas.

Telemedicine is the cost-effective and practical answer to the Alaska dilemma. Currently, there is an exciting project underway known as the Alaska Telemedicine project. This consortium of Alaskan health care providers and telecommunication carriers has been diligently working to unite health care in Alaska. This project has successfully united the Native health corporations, military medical facilities, and public and private hospitals of Alaska.

The fragmented nature of health care delivery in Alaska and Alaska satellite-based narrow-band telecommunications infrastructure, along with the geography and climate of Alaska, make Alaska an ideal place for the Alaska Telemedicine project to flourish.

In 1995, the Health Care Financing Administration [HCFA], pursuant to a mandate in 42 U.S.C. 1395(b)(1) which directs HCFA to establish demonstration projects that explore innovative methodologies of Medicare cost-savings, developed a telemedicine Medicare reimbursement project for rural America. Five demonstration sites were established in four States: Iowa, West Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia. The purpose of these programs was to investigate Medicare reimbursement for telemedicine in rural locations.

Unfortunately, the HCFA study of rural telemedicine contains a glaring omission: The study does not include any sites in rural Western locations. The omission of the rural West, which contains extremely remote and frontier locations will result in a deficient and likely inaccurate study for rural telemedicine.

Our legislation will expand the HCFA project to better represent rural America. A site in Alaska and in Montana will be included. Montana, like Alaska, experiences significant difficulties in providing health care services in rural areas. Montana's five independent telemedicine projects that have formed a united alliance will also be included in the HCFA project.

Mr. President, the goal of telemedicine Medicare reimbursement is to ensure that the elderly of America who reside in inaccessible rural areas will be allowed to have access to quality health care in the most cost-effective manner—via telecommunication networks. Establishing Medicare reimbursement stabilizes telemedicine technology, and will likely lead to widespread coverage of telehealth services by private insurers.

Senator BAUCUS and my bill, will merely expand the current demonstration project conducted by HCFA. By this expansion, the HCFA study will better represent rural telemedicine in the Nation. I ask that my colleagues support the Rural Telemedicine Demonstration Act of 1997.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 848

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Rural Telemedicine Demonstration Act of 1997".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Access to health care providers is critically important to improving the health of individuals residing in rural areas.

(2) Individuals residing in the rural areas of the Western United States are severely underserved by both primary and specialty health care providers.

(3) Telecommunications technology has made it possible to provide a wide range of vital health care services to individuals residing in remote locations and over vast distances at a fraction of the costs associated with the provision of such services without such technology.

(4) On February 17, 1997, the General Accounting Office reported that Federal involvement in telehealth systems is needed for the success of such systems.

(5) In order for telehealth systems to continue to benefit rural communities, the Medicare program under title XVIII of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395 et seq.) must eventually reimburse the provision of health care services to remote locations via telecommunication.

(6) The current Medicare telemedicine demonstration program conducted by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, through the Health Care Financing Administration, does not include any sites in rural areas of the Western United States. Without such sites, such demonstration program will not provide accurate indicators of the success of telemedicine.

(7)(A) The fragmented nature of Alaska's transportation infrastructure, as well as extremes in geography, climates, and ethnography create severe problems for health care providers to provide health care services to the individuals residing in Alaska.

(B) The Alaska Telemedicine Project is a statewide telehealth project which overcomes infrastructure problems within Alaska by uniting 40 public and private health care providers across Alaska to provide health care services to the residents of Alaska.

(8)(A) Health care providers in Montana also experience significant difficulties in providing health care services in rural areas. Five independent telemedicine networks in Montana have formed the Montana Healthcare Telecommunications Alliance (MHTA), an association of telemedicine service providers representing not-for-profit and public medical and mental health facilities throughout the State.

(B) The goal of the MHTA is to promote cost effective statewide deployment of telemedicine services thereby supporting public and private health care providers and improving access to quality medical and men-

tal health services for all individuals residing in Montana.

SEC. 3. EXPANSION OF DEMONSTRATION PROJECT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, through the Health Care Financing Administration, shall expand the demonstration project known as the Medicare telemedicine demonstration program to include within such demonstration program the Alaska Telemedicine Project (described in section 2(7)) and the Montana Healthcare Telecommunications Alliance (described in section 2(8)).

(b) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than March 1 of each year that the demonstration project described in subsection (a) is being conducted, the Secretary, through the Health Care Financing Administration, shall submit a report to Congress that contains—

(1) an evaluation of the effectiveness of such demonstration project; and

(2) any legislative recommendations determined appropriate by the Secretary.

(c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated \$2,000,000 to the Secretary of Health and Human Services to carry out the purposes of the demonstration project described in subsection (a).

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 98

At the request of Mr. HUTCHINSON, the name of the Senator from Alabama [Mr. SESSIONS] was added as a cosponsor of S. 98, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide a family tax credit.

S. 100

At the request of Mr. KERRY, the name of the Senator from Hawaii [Mr. INOUE] was added as a cosponsor of S. 100, a bill to amend title 49, United States Code, to provide protection for airline employees who provide certain air safety information, and for other purposes.

S. 127

At the request of Mr. MOYNIHAN, the names of the Senator from Ohio [Mr. DEWINE], the Senator from Illinois [Mr. DURBIN], and the Senator from Nebraska [Mr. KERREY] were added as cosponsors of S. 127, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to make permanent the exclusion for employer-provided educational assistance programs, and for other purposes.

S. 220

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Utah [Mr. HATCH] was added as a cosponsor of S. 220, a bill to require the United States Trade Representative to determine whether the European Union has failed to implement satisfactorily its obligations under certain trade agreements relating to United States meat and pork exporting facilities, and for other purposes.

S. 224

At the request of Mr. WARNER, the name of the Senator from Tennessee [Mr. FRIST] was added as a cosponsor of S. 224, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to permit covered beneficiaries under the military health care system who are also entitled to Medicare to enroll in the Federal Employees Health Benefits program, and for other purposes.

S. 249

At the request of Mr. D'AMATO, the names of the Senator from South Dakota [Mr. JOHNSON] and the Senator from Iowa [Mr. GRASSLEY] were added as cosponsors of S. 249, a bill to require that health plans provide coverage for a minimum hospital stay for mastectomies and lymph node dissection for the treatment of breast cancer, coverage for reconstructive surgery following mastectomies, and coverage for secondary consultations.

S. 278

At the request of Mr. GRAMM, the name of the Senator from South Carolina [Mr. THURMOND] was added as a cosponsor of S. 278, a bill to guarantee the right of all active duty military personnel, merchant mariners, and their dependents to vote in Federal, State, and local elections.

S. 293

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from Tennessee [Mr. FRIST] was added as a cosponsor of S. 293, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to make permanent the credit for clinical testing expenses for certain drugs for rare diseases or conditions.

S. 335

At the request of Mr. WARNER, the name of the Senator from Tennessee [Mr. FRIST] was added as a cosponsor of S. 335, a bill to authorize funds for construction of highways, and for other purposes.

S. 370

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from South Dakota [Mr. JOHNSON] was added as a cosponsor of S. 370, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for increased medicare reimbursement for nurse practitioners and clinical nurse specialists to increase the delivery of health services in health professional shortage areas, and for other purposes.

S. 371

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from South Dakota [Mr. JOHNSON] was added as a cosponsor of S. 371, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for increased medicare reimbursement for physician assistants, to increase the delivery of health services in health professional shortage areas, and for other purposes.

S. 375

At the request of Mr. MCCAIN, the name of the Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID] was added as a cosponsor of S. 375, a bill to amend title II of the Social Security Act to restore the link between the maximum amount of earnings by blind individuals permitted without demonstrating ability to engage in substantial gainful activity and the exempt amount permitted in determining excess earnings under the earnings test.

S. 377

At the request of Mr. BURNS, the name of the Senator from Washington

[Mr. GORTON] was added as a cosponsor of S. 377, a bill to promote electronic commerce by facilitating the use of strong encryption, and for other purposes.

S. 381

At the request of Mr. ROCKEFELLER, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania [Mr. SANTORUM] was added as a cosponsor of S. 381, a bill to establish a demonstration project to study and provide coverage of routine patient care costs for medicare beneficiaries with cancer who are enrolled in an approved clinical trial program.

S. 385

At the request of Mr. CONRAD, the name of the Senator from South Dakota [Mr. JOHNSON] was added as a cosponsor of S. 385, a bill to provide reimbursement under the medicare program for telehealth services, and for other purposes.

S. 387

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from Maine [Ms. SNOWE] was added as a cosponsor of S. 387, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide equity to exports of software.

S. 398

At the request of Mrs. MURRAY, the name of the Senator from Hawaii [Mr. INOUE] was added as a cosponsor of S. 398, a bill to amend title 49, United States Code, to require the use of child restraint systems approved by the Secretary of Transportation on commercial aircraft, and for other purposes.

S. 404

At the request of Mr. BOND, the name of the Senator from Utah [Mr. BENNETT] was added as a cosponsor of S. 404, a bill to modify the budget process to provide for separate budget treatment of the dedicated tax revenues deposited in the Highway Trust Fund.

S. 427

At the request of Mr. SHELBY, the name of the Senator from Louisiana [Mr. BREAUX] was added as a cosponsor of S. 427, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to restore the deduction for lobbying expenses in connection with State legislation.

S. 460

At the request of Mr. BOND, the names of the Senator from Tennessee [Mr. FRIST] and the Senator from Alabama [Mr. SESSIONS] were added as cosponsors of S. 460, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to increase the deduction for health insurance costs of self-employed individuals, to provide clarification for the deductibility of expenses incurred by a taxpayer in connection with the business use of the home, to clarify the standards used for determining that certain individuals are not employees, and for other purposes.

S. 472

At the request of Mr. CRAIG, the name of the Senator from Colorado [Mr. CAMPBELL] was added as a cosponsor of S. 472, a bill to provide for

referenda in which the residents of Puerto Rico may express democratically their preferences regarding the political status of the territory, and for other purposes.

S. 474

At the request of Mr. KYL, the name of the Senator from Washington [Mr. GORTON] was added as a cosponsor of S. 474, a bill to amend sections 1081 and 1084 of title 18, United States Code.

S. 492

At the request of Mr. SARBANES, the name of the Senator from New Jersey [Mr. TORRICELLI] was added as a cosponsor of S. 492, a bill to amend certain provisions of title 5, United States Code, in order to ensure equality between Federal firefighters and other employees in the civil service and other public sector firefighters, and for other purposes.

S. 493

At the request of Mr. KYL, the name of the Senator from North Dakota [Mr. DORGAN] was added as a cosponsor of S. 493, a bill to amend section 1029 of title 18, United States Code, with respect to cellular telephone cloning paraphernalia.

S. 505

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from Nebraska [Mr. HAGEL] was added as a cosponsor of S. 505, a bill to amend the provisions of title 17, United States Code, with respect to the duration of copyright, and for other purposes.

S. 509

At the request of Mr. BURNS, the name of the Senator from Missouri [Mr. ASHCROFT] was added as a cosponsor of S. 509, a bill to provide for the return of certain program and activity funds rejected by States to the Treasury to reduce the Federal deficit, and for other purposes.

S. 511

At the request of Mr. CHAFEE, the names of the Senator from California [Mrs. BOXER] and the Senator from Louisiana [Ms. LANDRIEU] were added as cosponsors of S. 511, a bill to require that the health and safety of a child be considered in any foster care or adoption placement, to eliminate barriers to the termination of parental rights in appropriate cases, to promote the adoption of children with special needs, and for other purposes.

S. 524

At the request of Mr. DASCHLE, the name of the Senator from South Dakota [Mr. JOHNSON] was added as a cosponsor of S. 524, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to remove the requirement of an x ray as a condition of coverage of chiropractic services under the Medicare Program.

S. 535

At the request of Mr. MCCAIN, the name of the Senator from South Dakota [Mr. JOHNSON] was added as a cosponsor of S. 535, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for the establishment of a program for

research and training with respect to Parkinson's disease.

S. 537

At the request of Ms. MIKULSKI, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania [Mr. SANTORUM] was added as a cosponsor of S. 537, a bill to amend title III of the Public Health Service Act to revise and extend the mammography quality standards program.

S. 598

At the request of Mr. DOMENICI, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire [Mr. GREGG] was added as a cosponsor of S. 598, a bill to amend section 3006A of title 18, United States Code, to provide for the public disclosure of court appointed attorneys' fees upon approval of such fees by the court.

S. 607

At the request of Mr. COATS, the name of the Senator from West Virginia [Mr. BYRD] was added as a cosponsor of S. 607, a bill to amend the Communications Act of 1934 to provide for the implementation of systems for rating the specific content of specific television programs.

S. 623

At the request of Mr. INOUE, the name of the Senator from California [Mrs. BOXER] was added as a cosponsor of S. 623, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to deem certain service in the organized military forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines and the Philippine Scouts to have been active service for purposes of benefits under programs administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

S. 649

At the request of Ms. SNOWE, the name of the Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID] was added as a cosponsor of S. 649, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for coverage of bone mass measurements for certain individuals under part B of the Medicare Program.

S. 693

At the request of Mr. D'AMATO, the name of the Senator from Texas [Mrs. HUTCHISON] was added as a cosponsor of S. 693, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide that the value of qualified historic property shall not be included in determining the taxable estate of a decedent.

S. 709

At the request of Mr. HAGEL, the name of the Senator from Wyoming [Mr. ENZI] was added as a cosponsor of S. 709, a bill to protect private property rights guaranteed by the fifth amendment to the Constitution by requiring Federal agencies to prepare private property taking impact analyses and by allowing expanded access to Federal courts.

S. 716

At the request of Mr. CRAIG, the name of the Senator from South Dakota [Mr. DASCHLE] was added as a cosponsor of S. 716, a bill to establish a

Joint United States-Canada Commission on Cattle and Beef to identify, and recommend means of resolving, national, regional, and provincial trade-distorting differences between the countries with respect to the production, processing, and sale of cattle and beef, and for other purposes.

S. 718

At the request of Mr. DOMENICI, the names of the Senator from Oklahoma [Mr. INHOFE] and the Senator from Arkansas [Mr. HUTCHINSON] were added as cosponsors of S. 718, a bill to amend the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, and for other purposes.

S. 763

At the request of Mr. HELMS, the name of the Senator from Arkansas [Mr. HUTCHINSON] was added as a cosponsor of S. 763, a bill to amend the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 to require a local educational agency that receives funds under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to expel a student determined to be in possession of an illegal drug, or illegal drug paraphernalia, on school property, in addition to expelling a student determined to be in possession of a gun.

S. 765

At the request of Mr. ENZI, the name of the Senator from Ohio [Mr. DEWINE] was added as a cosponsor of S. 765, a bill to amend the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 to further improve the safety and health of working environments, and for other purposes.

S. 766

At the request of Ms. SNOWE, the names of the Senator from Georgia [Mr. CLELAND] and the Senator from Illinois [Ms. MOSELEY-BRAUN] were added as cosponsors of S. 766, a bill to require equitable coverage of prescription contraceptive drugs and devices, and contraceptive services under health plans.

S. 775

At the request of Mr. JEFFORDS, the names of the Senator from South Dakota [Mr. JOHNSON] and the Senator from Wisconsin [Mr. FEINGOLD] were added as cosponsors of S. 775, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to exclude gain or loss from the sale of livestock from the computation of capital gain net income for purposes of the earned income credit.

S. 779

At the request of Mr. REID, the name of the Senator from Arkansas [Mr. HUTCHINSON] was added as a cosponsor of S. 779, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to increase the number of physicians that complete a fellowship in geriatric medicine and geriatric psychiatry, and for other purposes.

S. 785

At the request of Mr. SMITH, the name of the Senator from Oregon [Mr. WYDEN] was added as a cosponsor of S. 785, a bill to convey certain land to the City of Grants Pass, Oregon.

S. 819

At the request of Mr. WARNER, the name of the Senator from Virginia [Mr. ROBB] was added as a cosponsor of S. 819, a bill to designate the United States courthouse at 200 South Washington Street in Alexandria, Virginia, as the "Martin V.B. Bostetter, Jr. United States Courthouse".

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 6

At the request of Mr. KYL, the name of the Senator from Nevada [Mr. BRYAN] was added as a cosponsor of Senate Joint Resolution 6, a joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States to protect the rights of crime victims.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 28

At the request of Mr. GLENN, his name was added as a cosponsor of Senate Concurrent Resolution 28, a concurrent resolution expressing the sense of Congress that the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency should take immediate steps to abate emissions of mercury and release to Congress the study of mercury required under the Clean Air Act, and for other purposes.

SENATE RESOLUTION 92

At the request of Mr. LAUTENBERG, the names of the Senator from California [Mrs. FEINSTEIN], the Senator from Vermont [Mr. LEAHY], the Senator from Rhode Island [Mr. REED], the Senator from Oklahoma [Mr. INHOFE], the Senator from Washington [Mrs. MURRAY], the Senator from Hawaii [Mr. INOUE], the Senator from Nevada [Mr. BRYAN], the Senator from Illinois [Ms. MOSELEY-BRAUN], the Senator from Maine [Ms. SNOWE], the Senator from Maryland [Ms. MIKULSKI], the Senator from Texas [Mr. GRAMM], the Senator from Florida [Mr. GRAHAM], the Senator from North Dakota [Mr. DORGAN], the Senator from Pennsylvania [Mr. SPECTER], the Senator from South Dakota [Mr. JOHNSON], and the Senator from Virginia [Mr. ROBB] were added as cosponsors of Senate Resolution 92, a resolution designating July 2, 1997, and July 2, 1998, as "National Literacy Day."

SENATE RESOLUTION 94

At the request of Mr. WARNER, the names of the Senator from Indiana [Mr. LUGAR], the Senator from Arkansas [Mr. HUTCHINSON], the Senator from Mississippi [Mr. COCHRAN], and the Senator from Tennessee [Mr. FRIST] were added as cosponsors of Senate Resolution 94, a resolution commending the American Medical Association on its 150th anniversary, its 150 years of caring for the United States, and its continuing effort to uphold the principles upon which Nathan Davis, M.D. and his colleagues founded the American Medical Association to "promote the science and art of medicine and the betterment of public health."

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 31—CONCERNING THE PAL-ESTINIAN AUTHORITY

Mr. D'AMATO (for himself, Mr. BOND, Mr. MACK, and Mr. SPECTER) submitted