

this bill. While I would note that the opportunities presented by electronic records go beyond banks, it is certainly not my intention to have this bill interfere in the jurisdiction of the Banking Committee. Therefore, I would ask the Chairman whether the portion of the language pertaining to records would best be removed from the bill and left for further work by the Banking Committee.

Mr. GRAMM. Yes it would. I would also say to the Senator from Michigan that, with this modification, I would have no further objection to the consideration of this bill. Also, I want to once again express my support for what the Senator is seeking to accomplish and pledge to assist him in this effort.

Mr. ABRAHAM. I thank the distinguished Chairman for his input.

Mr. GRAMM. I thank my colleague from Michigan.

CLEMENCY OFFER TO FALN MEMBERS

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, as you know I have been a strong critic of the President's recent decision to offer clemency to the 16 members of the Puerto Rican terrorist organization FALN. I have held hearings on this matter and have seen the outrage this action has prompted in many of my constituents and the public at large. I have received numerous communications regarding this situation which criticize the President's decision and question his motives. In particular, I would like to thank Larry Stewart of Lynchburg, Virginia, one of the first to bring this matter to my attention. His interest in this action and its effect on our overall terrorism policy have been appreciated and helpful to me as our work on this issue has progressed.

THE MEDICARE BENEFICIARIES ACCESS TO CARE ACT

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I speak today in support of Senator DASCHLE's bill titled the Medicare Beneficiary Access to Care Act, S.1678. I am proud to cosponsor this important bill because it will provide relief for health care providers suffering under drastic cuts resulting from the Balanced Budget Act (BBA) of 1997. That legislation has had a very negative impact on the Medicare program and the financial viability of our medical establishments providing care under that program. The Senate Minority Leader's legislation will scale back some of the BBA reductions and therefore provide the necessary reimbursement for providers who give needed medical services to patients. Let me be clear, patients will be the ultimate beneficiaries when this bill is enacted. A basic fact is that any person seeking medical attention will likely visit a medical establishment currently being affected by BBA payment reductions. If medical facilities close due to BBA cuts, it will adversely impact not only

Medicare beneficiaries, but all of the citizens in that same community who need access to health care.

Back in 1997, I did not support the Balanced Budget Act. In fact, when this came up for consideration back then I said "Mr. President, this is a huge mistake - a huge mistake." Realizing the vital role of Medicare in our country, I thought that we should be going in the opposite direction - providing the opportunity for all Americans to access decent healthcare. Although BBA passed, I did hope that it would not severely impact Medicare beneficiaries or the healthcare establishments that provide their care. Unfortunately, my worst fears have come true.

I have had an almost continuous stream of people from Minnesota come into my office and tell me about the dramatic, draconian effects that BBA has had on the ability of medical establishments to provide needed medical services to people in my state. We have heard from large academic teaching hospitals, small rural clinics, home healthcare agencies, skilled nursing facilities, hospices and physicians. It is hard to think of a medical establishment that has not been impacted by these cuts. According to the hospitals in my state, the total impact of BBA cuts for Minnesota over 5 years will be \$908 million. The prognosis is really disturbing. We hear many service providers tell us they can not continue their operations because of these cuts. They are going to close their doors and shut down. Some of these establishments are located in rural settings where they are the only hospital or clinic or nursing facility within dozens and dozens of miles. What is going to happen when these facilities close? The answer is that peoples' health will suffer and the communities will suffer economically. The communities will suffer because they don't have a hospital. Businesses will be reluctant to locate in a community that does not have access to healthcare.

It doesn't have to be this way. In the United States Senate, we have the opportunity to fix some of the problems created by BBA. Senator DASCHLE's bill will lessen the impact of the BBA cuts on providers, thus benefitting patients. I think this package will make a substantial difference.

This bill will help our teaching hospitals by limiting further decreases in the Indirect Medical Education payments. Teaching hospitals are important not only because they train future physicians, but also because they treat a large number of Medicare beneficiaries. For skilled nursing facilities, this bill will repeal the \$1500 therapy caps for three years until a new system can be implemented. For Home Healthcare Agencies, this bill postpones the 15% cut in payments for 2 years. For physicians, this bill would smooth out the fluctuations in physician payment rates. For Medicare Plus Choice, this bill provides enrollees with

additional time to switch plans if their plan terminates. For clinics, this bill will create a new payment system that is linked to 1999 costs along with subsequent updates. For hospices, this bill will increase hospice payments by the full market basket updates.

This bill will allow many medical facilities in my state to continue operating. I'm sure the same holds true for most states. We need to pass this bill now. Health care is too important an issue. Even though not everybody has access to it, we do have a great health care system and it needs to be preserved. The BBA was a mistake, and now is the time to limit some of the resulting adverse consequences. I hope that my colleagues will join me in support of this bill.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Monday, October 4, 1999, the Federal debt stood at \$5,654,411,268,306.82 (Five trillion, six hundred fifty-four billion, four hundred eleven million, two hundred sixty-eight thousand, three hundred six dollars and eighty-two cents).

Five years ago, October 4, 1994, the Federal debt stood at \$4,692,027,000,000 (Four trillion, six hundred ninety-two billion, twenty-seven million).

Ten years ago, October 4, 1989, the Federal debt stood at \$2,878,049,000,000 (Two trillion, eight hundred seventy-eight billion, forty-nine million).

Fifteen years ago, October 4, 1984, the Federal debt stood at \$1,572,268,000,000 (One trillion, five hundred seventy-two billion, two hundred sixty-eight million).

Twenty-five years ago, October 4, 1974, the Federal debt stood at \$476,919,000,000 (Four hundred seventy-six billion, nine hundred nineteen million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$5 trillion—\$5,177,492,268,306.82 (Five trillion, one hundred seventy-seven billion, four hundred ninety-two million, two hundred sixty-eight thousand, three hundred six dollars and eighty-two cents) during the past 25 years.

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

At 9:32 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Ms. Niland, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bills:

S. 1606. An act to reenact chapter 12 of title 11, United States Code, and for other purposes.

S. 323. An act to redesignate the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument as a national park and establish the Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2084. An act making appropriations for the Department of Transportation and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes.

The enrolled bills were signed subsequently by the President pro tempore (Mr. THURMOND).

At 11:05 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Ms. Niland, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 356. An act to provide for the conveyance of certain property from the United States to Stainislaus County, California.

H.R. 1451. An act to establish the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission.

H.R. 1794. An act concerning the participation of Taiwan in the World Health Organization (WHO).

H.R. 2401. An act to amend the U.S. Holocaust Assets Commission Act of 1998 to extend the period by which the final report is due and to authorize additional funding.

H.R. 2607. An act to promote the development of the commercial space transportation industry, to authorize appropriations for the Office of the Associate Administrator for Commercial Space Transportation, to authorize appropriations for the Office of Space Commercialization, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2681. An act to establish a program, coordinated by the National Transportation Safety Board, of assistance to families of passengers involved in rail passenger accidents.

The message also announced that the House has agreed to the following concurrent resolutions in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H. Con. Res. 171. Concurrent resolution congratulating the American Public Transit Association for 25 years of commendable service to the transit industry and the Nation.

H. Con. Res. 191. Concurrent resolution expressing the sense of the Congress that the Brooklyn Museum of Art should not receive Federal funds unless it closes its exhibits featuring works of a sacrilegious nature.

The message further announced that the House disagrees to the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 2466) making appropriations for the Departments of the Interior and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes, and agrees to the conference asked by the Senate on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon; and appoints Mr. REGULA, Mr. KOLBE, Mr. SKEEN, Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina, Mr. NETHERCUTT, Mr. WAMP, Mr. KINGSTON, Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania, Mr. YOUNG of Florida, Mr. DICKS, Mr. MURTHA, Mr. MORAN of Virginia, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. HINCHEY, and Mr. OBEY as managers of the conference on the part of the House.

The message also announced that the House disagrees to the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 2684) making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing Development, and for sundry independent agencies, boards, commissions, corporations, and for offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes, and agrees to the conference asked by the Senate on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon; and appoints Mr. WALSH, Mr. DELAY, Mr. HOBSON, Mr. KNOLLENBERG, Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN, Mr. WICKER, Mrs. NORTHUP, Mr. SUNUNU, Mr. YOUNG of Florida, Mr. MOLLOHAN, Ms. KAPUR, Mrs. MEEK of Florida, Mr. PRICE of

North Carolina, Mr. CRAMER, and Mr. OBEY as the managers of the conference on the part of the House.

The message further announced that pursuant to section 301 of Public Law 104-1, the Speaker and the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives and the Majority and Minority Leaders of the United States Senate appoints jointly the following individuals to a 5-year term to the Board of Directors of the Office of Compliance: Mr. Alan V. Friedman of California, Ms. Susan S. Robfogel of New York, and Ms. Barbara Childs Wallace of Mississippi.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bills were read the first and second times by unanimous consent and referred as indicated:

H.R. 1451. An act to establish the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

H.R. 1794. An act concerning the participation of Taiwan in the World Health Organization (WHO); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

H.R. 2401. An act to amend the U.S. Holocaust Assets Commission Act of 1998 to extend the period by which the final report is due and to authorize additional funding; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

H.R. 2681. An act to establish a program, coordinated by the National Transportation Safety Board, of assistance to families of passengers involved in rail passenger accidents; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

The following concurrent resolutions were read and referred as indicated:

H. Con. Res. 171. Concurrent resolution congratulating the American Public Transit Association for 25 years of commendable service to the transit industry and the Nation; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

H. Con. Res. 191. Concurrent resolution expressing the sense of the Congress that the Brooklyn Museum of Art should not receive Federal funds unless it closes its exhibits featuring works of a sacrilegious nature; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

ENROLLED BILL PRESENTED

The Secretary of the Senate reported that on October 5, 1999, he had presented to the President of the United States, the following enrolled bill:

S. 1606. An act to extend for 9 additional months the period for which chapter 12 of title 11, United States Code, is reenacted.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEE

The following executive reports of a committee were submitted:

By Mr. LUGAR, for the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry:

Paul W. Fiddick, of Texas, to be an Assistant Secretary of Agriculture.

Andrew C. Fish, of Vermont, to be an Assistant Secretary of Agriculture.

The above nominations were reported with the recommendation that they be confirmed, subject to the nominees' commitment to respond to re-

quests to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Senate.)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second time by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. MURKOWSKI:

S. 1686. A bill to provide for the conveyances of land interests to Chugach Alaska Corporation to fulfill the intent, purpose, and promise of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. McCAIN:

S. 1687. A bill to amend the Federal Trade Commission Act to authorize appropriations for the Federal Trade Commission; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. LEVIN (for himself and Mr. AKAKA):

S. 1688. A bill to amend chapter 89 of title 5, United States Code, relating to the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program, to enable the Federal Government to enroll an employee and the family of the employee in the program when a State court orders the employee to provide health insurance coverage for a child of the employee, but the employee fails to provide the coverage, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Mr. HELMS, and Mr. DEWINE):

S. 1689. A bill to require a report on the current United States policy and strategy regarding counter-narcotics assistance for Colombia, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. MACK (for himself, Mr. SAR-BANES, Mr. DEWINE, Mr. LIEBERMAN, Mr. JEFFORDS, Mr. KERREY, Mr. LUGAR, Mr. KERRY, Mr. DODD, and Ms. LANDRIEU):

S. 1690. A bill to require the United States to take action to provide bilateral debt relief, and improve the provision of multilateral debt relief, in order to give a fresh start to poor countries; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. INHOFE (for himself, Mr. GRAHAM, and Mr. VOINOVICH):

S. 1691. A bill to amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to authorize programs for predisaster mitigation, to streamline the administration of disaster relief, to control the Federal costs of disaster assistance, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. SANTORUM (for himself, Mr. SMITH of New Hampshire, Mr. ABRAHAM, Mr. ASHCROFT, Mr. BROWNBACK, Mr. BURNS, Mr. CRAIG, Mr. DEWINE, Mr. ENZI, Mr. FRIST, Mr. GRAMM, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. HATCH, Mr. HUTCHINSON, Mr. KYL, Mr. MACK, Mr. McCONNELL, Mr. NICKLES, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. SMITH of Oregon, Mr. THURMOND, Mr. WARNER, Mr. BENNETT, Mr. LOTT, Mr. ALLARD, Mr. BOND, Mr. BUNNING, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. DOMENICI, Mr. FITZ-GERALD, Mr. GORTON, Mr. GRAMS, Mr. HAGEL, Mr. HELMS, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. LUGAR, Mr. McCAIN, Mr. MURKOWSKI, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. SHELBY, Mr. THOMAS, Mr. VOINOVICH, and Mr. COVERDELL): S. 1692. A bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to ban partial birth abortions; read the first time.