

THE MEDICARE GLAUCOMA DETECTION ACT OF 2000

Mr. ROBB. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce the Medicare Glaucoma Detection Act of 2000. I'm pleased to be joined in its introduction by my colleagues Senator CHAFEE and Senator MOYNIHAN.

Mr. President, the Medicare Glaucoma Detection Act follows suit in a series of preventive health proposals I've cosponsored to help Medicare beneficiaries take a more active role in their health care. Reforming Medicare by adding preventive benefits recognizes that it is much more cost effective to prevent illness than to treat it. Over the past several years, Congress has expanded Medicare's preventive benefits, adding screening and detection services like mammography, bone mass measurements and screening for prostate and colorectal cancer to help Medicare beneficiaries. It is now time to add another important prevention benefit to Medicare: screening for glaucoma.

The Medicare Glaucoma Detection Act of 2000 will give seniors access to the best defense against glaucoma—complete eye examinations on a regular basis. Glaucoma is a significant cause of legal blindness in this country and is the single most common cause of irreversible blindness among African-Americans. In fact, the prevalence of glaucoma is an astounding four to six times higher in African-Americans than the rest of the population.

Glaucoma is often called "the silent thief of sight" because the afflicted person has no warning sign, no hint that anything is wrong. Over the years, the increased buildup of pressure causes damage to the optic nerve in the back of the eyes. Because the disease does not show any symptoms until considerable damage has been done, coverage of regularly scheduled exams is a critical step in controlling the disease. If detected in the early stages, glaucoma can be effectively treated to prevent loss of vision.

The bill I am introducing today will establish a Medicare glaucoma detection benefit that follows the guidelines set forth by the American Academy of Ophthalmology, which recommend that individuals 60 years of age or older with a family history of glaucoma receive a glaucoma screening once every two years. Too many of America's seniors are in danger of losing their vision—an estimated 120,000 persons are legally blind due to glaucoma. This bill is the first step toward reversing that trend.

Mr. President, it's important to note that blindness is not simply a medical problem—the costs of glaucoma are both the personal loss of sight and the economic costs to the individual and society associated with blindness. Annual costs to the government associated with blindness are estimated at more than four billion dollars. Moreover, eyesight is a gift that allows seniors to maintain their independence.

By helping preserve the ability of seniors to cook, to shop, to drive, to care for themselves and to recognize family and friends, the Medicare Glaucoma Detection Act of 2000 will allow seniors to stay independent longer.

We do not yet have a cure for glaucoma, but blindness from glaucoma can be prevented through early detection and treatment. I urge each of my colleagues to support this bill's passage.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 482

At the request of Mr. ABRAHAM, the name of the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 482, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to repeal the increase in the tax on the social security benefits.

S. 721

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mr. SMITH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 721, a bill to allow media coverage of court proceedings.

S. 779

At the request of Mr. ABRAHAM, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Mr. REID) was added as a cosponsor of S. 779, a bill to provide that no Federal income tax shall be imposed on amounts received by Holocaust victims or their heirs.

S. 1020

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the names of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. DASCHLE) and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. DEWINE) were added as cosponsors of S. 1020, a bill to amend chapter 1 of title 9, United States Code, to provide for greater fairness in the arbitration process relating to motor vehicle franchise contracts.

S. 1805

At the request of Mr. KENNEDY, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1805, a bill to restore food stamp benefits for aliens, to provide States with flexibility in administering the food stamp vehicle allowance, to index the excess shelter expense deduction to inflation, to authorize additional appropriations to purchase and make available additional commodities under the emergency food assistance program, and for other purposes.

S. 1810

At the request of Mrs. MURRAY, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. VOINOVICH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1810, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify and improve veterans' claims and appellate procedures.

S. 1900

At the request of Mr. LAUTENBERG, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. INOUE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1900, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow a credit to holders of qualified bonds issued by Amtrak, and for other purposes.

S. 2299

At the request of Mr. L. CHAFEE, the name of the Senator from Louisiana (Ms. LANDRIEU) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2299, a bill to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to continue State Medicaid disproportionate share hospital (DSH) allotments for fiscal year 2001 at the levels for fiscal year 2000.

S. 2334

At the request of Mr. L. CHAFEE, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2334, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend expensing of environmental remediation costs for an additional 6 years and to include sites in metropolitan statistical areas.

S. 2335

At the request of Mr. L. CHAFEE, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2335, a bill to authorize the Secretary of the Army to carry out a program to provide assistance in the remediation and restoration of brownfields, and for other purposes.

S. 2365

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. WELLSTONE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2365, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to eliminate the 15 percent reduction in payment rates under the prospective payment system for home health services.

S. 2434

At the request of Mr. L. CHAFEE, the names of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. BINGAMAN), the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. HUTCHINSON), the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. GRAMS), the Senator from Arkansas (Mrs. LINCOLN) and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY) were added as cosponsors of S. 2434, a bill to provide that amounts allotted to a State under section 2401 of the Social Security Act for each of fiscal years 1998 and 1999 shall remain available through fiscal year 2002.

S. 2600

At the request of Ms. SNOWE, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. WELLSTONE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2600, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to make enhancements to the critical access hospital program under the medicare program.

S. 2644

At the request of Mr. GORTON, the name of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. BYRD) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2644, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to expand medicare coverage of certain self-injected biologicals.

S. 2703

At the request of Mr. AKAKA, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. BINGAMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2703, a bill to amend the provisions of title 39, United States Code, relating to the manner in which pay policies and schedules and fringe benefit

programs for postmasters are established.

S. 2733

At the request of Mr. KERRY, the name of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2733, a bill to provide for the preservation of assisted housing for low income elderly persons, disabled persons, and other families.

S. 2735

At the request of Mr. CONRAD, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. WELLSTONE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2735, a bill to promote access to health care services in rural areas.

S. 2787

At the request of Mr. BIDEN, the names of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAIG) and the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SHELBY) were added as cosponsors of S. 2787, a bill to reauthorize the Federal programs to prevent violence against women, and for other purposes.

S. 2806

At the request of Mr. SARBANES, the name of the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2806, a bill to amend the National Housing Act to clarify the authority of the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development to terminate mortgagee origination approval for poorly performing mortgagees.

S. 2879

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. L. CHAFEE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2879, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to establish programs and activities to address diabetes in children and youth, and for other purposes.

S. 2887

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. JEFFORDS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2887, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to exclude from gross income amounts received on account of claims based on certain unlawful discrimination and to allow income averaging for backpay and frontpay awards received on account of such claims, and for other purposes.

S. 2967

At the request of Mr. MURKOWSKI, the names of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. BREAU) and the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) were added as cosponsors of S. 2967, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to facilitate competition in the electric power industry.

S. 3009

At the request of Mr. HUTCHINSON, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. SARBANES) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3009, a bill to provide funds to the National Center for Rural Law Enforcement.

S. 3017

At the request of Mr. ROTH, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. DOMENICI) was added as a cosponsor of

S. 3017, a bill to amend the Social Security Act to establish an outpatient prescription drug assistance program for low-income medicare beneficiaries and medicare beneficiaries with high drug costs.

S.J. RES. 30

At the request of Mr. LOTT, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. LIEBERMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 30, a joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States relative to equal rights for women and men.

S. RES. 343

At the request of Mr. FITZGERALD, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. SPECTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 343, a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate that the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement should recognize and admit to full membership Israel's Magen David Adom Society with its emblem, the Red Shield of David.

SENATE RESOLUTION 351—TO DESIGNATE THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER OF 2000, AS "NATIONAL ALCOHOL AND DRUG ADDICTION RECOVERY MONTH"

Mr. WELLSTONE submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 351

Whereas alcohol and drug addiction is a devastating disease that can destroy lives, families, and communities;

Whereas the direct and indirect costs of alcohol and drug addiction cost the United States more than \$246,000,000,000 each year;

Whereas scientific evidence demonstrates the crucial role that treatment plays in restoring those suffering from alcohol and drug addiction to more productive lives;

Whereas in 1999, research at the National Institute on Drug Abuse at the National Institutes of Health showed that although there were improvements in some areas, the use of certain illicit drugs among our 13-18 year old children has increased significantly, particularly in the use of alcohol, Ecstasy, anabolic-androgenic steroids, and heroin;

Whereas the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy has recognized that the number 1 priority for the Nation's National Drug Control Strategy is to educate and enable America's youth to reject illegal drugs as well as alcohol and tobacco;

Whereas the severe lack of availability and coverage for addiction treatment is evidenced by the Hay Group Report showing that the value of substance abuse treatment benefits decreased by 74.5 percent from 1988 through 1998;

Whereas the Office of National Drug Control Policy recognizes that 80 percent of adolescents needing treatment are not able to access services either through lack of insurance coverage, or the unavailability of addiction treatment programs or trained providers in their community;

Whereas the lives of children and families are severely affected by alcohol and drug addiction, through the effects of the disease, and through the neglect, broken relationships, and violence that are so often a part of the disease of addiction;

Whereas a number of organizations and individuals dedicated to fighting addiction and promoting treatment and recovery will recognize the month of September of 2000 as National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month;

Whereas National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month celebrates the tremendous strides taken by individuals who have undergone successful treatment and recognizes those in the treatment field who have dedicated their lives to helping our young people recover from addiction;

Whereas the 2000 national campaign focuses on supporting adolescents in addiction treatment and recovery, embraces the theme of "Recovering Our Future: One Youth at a Time", and seeks to increase awareness about alcohol and drug addiction and to promote treatment and recovery for adolescents and adults; and

Whereas the countless numbers of those who have successfully recovered from addiction are living proof that people of all races, genders, and ages recover every day from the disease of alcohol and drug addiction, and now make positive contributions to their families, workplaces, communities, State, and Nation: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate does hereby designate the month of September of 2000 as "National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month".

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce a resolution that I will soon send to the desk to proclaim September, 2000, as "National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month," and to recognize the Administration, government agencies, and the many groups supporting this effort highlighting the critical need to support our children and adolescents in addiction treatment and recovery. The Year 2000 Recovery Month theme is "Recovering Our Future: One Youth at a Time," with a clear message that we need to increase awareness about alcohol and drug addiction and to promote treatment and recovery for our youth.

Addiction to alcohol and drugs is a disease that many individuals face as a painful, private struggle, often without access to treatment or medical care. But this disease also has staggering public costs. A 1998 report prepared by The Lewin Group for the National Institute on Drug Abuse and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, estimated the total economic cost of alcohol and drug abuse to be approximately \$264 billion for 1992. Of this cost, an estimated \$98 billion was due to addiction to illicit drugs and other drugs taken for non-medical purposes. This estimate includes addiction treatment and prevention costs, as well as costs associated with related illnesses, reduced job productivity or lost earnings, and other costs to society such as crime and social welfare programs.

Adults and children who have the disease of addiction can be found throughout our society. We know from the outstanding research done at the National Institute on Drug Abuse at the National Institutes of Health that although there were improvements in 1999 in some areas of drug use, the use of illicit drugs among our 13-18 year old children has increased significantly, particularly in the use of alcohol, Ecstasy, anabolic-androgenic