

OASIS. This means that patients who do not participate in Medicare are still subject to the Medicare assessment. That is exactly correct.

Last year, HCFA amended this regulation to say that these agencies don't have to transmit the data on non-Medicare patients for the time being. However, the agency still must spend the time making the assessment. So it is sort of a Catch-22. I am certainly sympathetic to the concerns raised by my constituents that these new regulations and spending cuts will harm, again, the senior. But aren't these policy changes necessary to achieve the Medicare saving goals established by the Balanced Budget Act, I ask my colleague?

Ms. COLLINS. As the Senator's rhetorical question implies, these are not necessary. The fact is that it now appears the savings goals set for home health have not only been met but far exceeded.

According to CBO, spending for home health care fell by 35 percent in 1999, and CBO cites the larger-than-anticipated drop in the use of home health services as the primary reason that total Medicare spending actually dropped, overall Medicare spending, by 1 percent last year. The CBO now projects that the post Balanced Budget Act reductions in home health care will be approximately \$69 billion. That is over four times the \$16 billion Congress expected to save. It is a clear indication that the cutbacks have been far deeper and far more wide reaching than Congress ever intended.

Mr. ROBERTS. Will my distinguished colleague yield for another question?

Ms. COLLINS. I am happy to yield.

Mr. ROBERTS. My colleague referred to—and I referred to it in my opening comments—the additional 15-percent cut across the board in these payments to go into effect on October 1, 2001. With regard to what she has just related to the Senate, given the savings that have already been achieved, the question is obvious, is this additional cut necessary?

I tell my colleagues and all those interested in this particular issue that last year we had to come up with an emergency bill. Nobody likes to do that.

We would prefer it to go through authorization and appropriations. Nobody likes to be faced with an emergency bill. This year is the same way. We are wrestling with that in terms of the budget caps we should live with. We are trying to figure that out. Here we are willing to provide more emergency money and we turn around and go through another 15-percent cut. It seems to me that is not conducive to what we are about with regard to consistency. What effect would that have with regard to home health care agencies?

Ms. COLLINS. A further 15-percent cut would be devastating. It would sound the death knell for those low-cost, nonprofit agencies in our States,

which are currently struggling to hang on. It would further reduce our seniors' access to critical home care services. As we have discussed, we don't need to do it. We already have more than achieved the savings goals that were put forth in 1997.

Mr. ROBERTS. If the Senator will yield for an additional question, what are we going to do to help remedy this serious problem? I know the Senator has legislation, but would she summarize what she thinks is the answer to that.

Ms. COLLINS. The Senator from Kansas has been a strong supporter along with my colleagues, Senators BOND and ASHCROFT from Missouri, as well as many colleagues, in cosponsoring legislation introduced to eliminate the automatic 15-percent reduction in Medicare payments that would otherwise occur. It would provide a measure of financial relief for those home health agencies that already are cost-efficient and doing a good job. That is what we need to do—to pass that legislation before we adjourn.

Mr. ROBERTS. If I may ask one additional question, what kind of support do we have in the Senate? I think the magic number is 55. I would like for the Senator to tell our colleagues.

Ms. COLLINS. I am pleased to confirm to the Senator from Kansas that my legislation has strong support not only from the Senator from Kansas but many of our colleagues. It has 55 Senate cosponsors, including 32 Republicans and 23 Democrats, showing that this is a nationwide problem. It also has strong backing of many consumer and patient groups, including the American Diabetes Association, American Nurses Association, National Council on Aging, and the American Hospital Association. All of these groups have come together because they know that an additional 15-percent cutback would be absolutely devastating to American seniors and people with disabilities.

So if we allow this to go into effect, any of our other efforts to strengthen Medicare and home health, to help improve that benefit will really be meaningless.

Mr. ROBERTS. I have one final question. First, I thank the Senator from Maine for all her leadership and her hard work in this effort, for tapping not so gently on the shoulders of the leadership and, in a bipartisan way, attracting all sorts of support for this bill. I believe it is possible for Congress to bring this much needed relief to the home health care industry, as well as to the small rural hospitals and the teaching hospitals that are feeling the pinch of all these regulatory and legislative changes made in the last few years—with every good intent.

But this is the law of unintended consequences personified. We must work quickly. Time is of the essence for many of our home health agencies and hospitals, especially the small rural providers. I don't want to have to go

out again on a 105-county listening tour in Kansas and have people come and say; Senator ROBERTS, thank you so much for your past help on a whole litany of things we have gone through regarding the home health care delivery system, only to find out that their doors may close.

I will continue to work with my colleague from Maine to pass legislation before Congress adjourns this year. We have a good team and we have good support. We cannot go home without providing help. I thank the distinguished Senator for her leadership in heading up a home health care posse for fairness and justice.

Ms. COLLINS. I thank the Senator from Kansas for his kind comments and his strong support and leadership. He clearly understands the issues involved. Time is of the essence. I appreciate the opportunity to discuss this issue this morning.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that after my 5 minutes of remarks Senator WELLSTONE and Senator HARKIN be recognized.

Mr. GRAMM. Mr. President, does that reserve my 20 minutes?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's 20 minutes is not affected by this request.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Is it the understanding of the Senator from Texas that after I speak Senator HARKIN and Senator WELLSTONE will speak immediately after me? I am under the impression that we have about 20 or 30 minutes on our side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The total is 25 minutes.

Mr. GRAMM. As I understand the schedule of the Senate, I think there would be no problem, as long as it didn't exceed 30 minutes.

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

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Texas. I will be very brief, and then Senator WELLSTONE will need about 10 minutes.

I thank my colleagues from Maine and Kansas for taking time to speak on the floor about such an important issue as health care. As we wrap up this session, I am very hopeful, in a bipartisan way, we can address specifically many of the questions that were raised in terms of the tough situation facing our home health care agencies and hospitals, our rural health clinics. It is something this Congress must address in the last few weeks. I thank them for their leadership.

CONSERVATION AND REINVESTMENT ACT

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I come to the floor to say a brief word about an extraordinary and very positive statement that the President of the United States made in the last 45

minutes as he gathered on the south lawn of the White House with a group of supporters of another very important bill—an issue we have actually debated for many hours and helped to usher through called the Conservation and Reinvestment Act.

The President, just this morning, called on us, in a bipartisan fashion, not to miss the opportunity to push forward on this very important piece of legislation—one which his administration has supported and helped to design. The Conservation and Reinvestment Act is really Congress's way of responding to a need that the American people have and have expressed themselves clearly on over and over, from the South to the North, from the East to the West, in meetings, through polling information that we have, through calls made to this Congress, through letters written, through e-mails sent—to say to us that now is the time to set aside a small but significant portion of the surplus that we have to invest—not for 1 year, or 6 months, not occasionally when we can, but to invest permanently a stream of revenue for conservation programs in our Nation.

I guess I can speak so passionately about this issue because the money we are speaking about investing is coming from offshore oil and gas revenues, 85 percent of which are produced off of the coast of Louisiana. We are proud of that production. We are doing it in a much more environmentally sensitive way and have been doing it for 50 years. But all of the revenue generated off of that oil and gas production has gone to the Federal Treasury. It is hard to account for how they have been spent, and they have not been spent for environmental investments for our Nation—a promise that was made 30 years ago but not kept.

So the Conservation and Reinvestment Act, which the President spoke about and continues to urge us to move forward on, is a way for us to redirect appropriately and in a very fiscally responsible way some of those revenues back to our States and local governments to help with the expansion of our parks and recreation areas in both rural and urban areas, for the preservation and restoration of our coastlines.

We in Louisiana feel strongly about getting some help from Washington to restore an eroding coastline, helping us to invest in wildlife conservation and preservation and, in many ways, including historic preservation. I will give to the staff a list of the 63 Senators, Republicans and Democrats, who are supporting this legislation, to acknowledge again in the RECORD the great work that the House leadership did—Congressman DON YOUNG, Congressman JOHN DINGELL, and Congressman GEORGE MILLER, leaders in the House.

It has truly been a bipartisan-bicameral effort.

I will submit for the RECORD the names of 63 Senators who the President

mentioned in his remarks this morning, thanking us for our support and joining with him in this effort, and finally shaping this bill in such a way that both parties can be proud, for which we in Louisiana can be grateful, and that Governors and mayors and elected officials and leaders all across our Nation can be happy to work on in partnership with the Federal Government to make a significant, meaningful, reliable investment now as we begin this century—something our children and our grandchildren can count on for a more beautiful nation in 2025 or 2050. We can't wait. This is the year to make it a reality.

I thank the Chair. Again, I thank Senator LOTT and Senator DASCHLE for their excellent leadership.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I thank the Chair. I thank the Senator from Louisiana for her excellent work. I just had three members of the department of natural resources of Minnesota in my office today encouraging me to support this measure. It is very important legislation.

NATIONAL HISTORICAL BLACK COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY WEEK

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, this week is a week that we take out to celebrate, to honor, and to acknowledge the great contributions that 105 Historically Black Colleges and Universities have made to our Nation.

In Louisiana, I am very proud to represent four of the greatest of these institutions—Grambling State University, Southern University System, Xavier University, and Dillard University—and to recognize their great contributions in making our Nation stronger, and as we enter the new century to reassert my commitment and to acknowledge their great and significant place in the educational framework of our Nation.

On September 14, 2000, President Clinton proclaimed this week as National Historical Black Colleges Week and asked the country to join him in honoring the tremendous contributions these institutions have made not only to the lives of the students they serve but also to the history of this country. As a Senator from Louisiana, I am proud to have four HBCUs in the State of Louisiana: Dillard University, Grambling State University, Southern University System, and Xavier University.

For too many years in our Nation's history—HBCUs were the sole source of higher education for African Americans. Today, HBCUs confer the majority of the bachelor's and advanced degrees awarded to African American students in physical science, mathematics, computer science, engineering, and education. There are now 105 HBCUs in existence, providing an array of disciplines at both public and private medical schools, four-year institutions, community and junior colleges.

Without their courage and commitment, this country would have been deprived of generations of African American educators, physicians, lawyers, scientists, and other professionals. In fact, a few of this country's cabinet members are alumni of HBCUs: Secretary of Labor, Alexis Herman—Xavier University; Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Togo West—Howard University; Former Secretary of Energy, Hazel O'Leary—Fisk University; and Former Secretary of Agriculture, Mike Espy—Howard University.

Like the President, I am proud to say that several members of my staff are graduates of historically black colleges and universities. Alicia Williams, Grambling State University; Tari Bradford, Southern University; Tony Eason, Grambling State University; Former Legislative Director, Ben Cannon, Xavier University and Southern University Law School; Kaira Stelly, Southern University at New Orleans; and Roderick Scott, Southern University.

In addition to educating many of our Nation's most distinguished African American professionals, HBCUs have remained steadfast to their commitment to improving the communities in which they reside and preserving America's history. Through countless forms of community service, including tutoring programs, head start, senior citizen programs, they teach their students to use their education to be men and women for others. Their libraries and colleges continue to serve as living repositories for the writings, artifacts, and photographs representing generations of African American history.

If one wants to estimate the effect that the Historically Black Colleges and Universities have had on the history of America, ask yourself what would the field of education be without the contributions of Booker T. Washington, or science without George Washington Carver, or Mathematics without Dr. Nan P. Manuel, or Engineering without Dr. Lonnie Sharp. This list is endless. Each year hundreds and thousands of students graduate from these vital institutions and are helping to shape the new century.

HBCUs have accomplished this enviable record of achievement despite numerous challenges. Even with limited financial resources and serving a relatively high number of disadvantaged students, they have kept their fees low so that no student is prohibited from accessing a quality education. For years, the faculty and staff have worked hard to provide a nurturing and accepting environment for their students, encouraging them to grow challenging them to meet the highest of academic standards.

Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to join me in taking this opportunity to salute the founders, faculty, staff, and students of America's Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Former President Lyndon B. Johnson once said, "Until justice is blind to