

MEDICARE INPATIENT HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, today, I am so pleased to join my good friends, Senator HUTCHISON from Texas and Senator BAYH from Indiana, in supporting this legislation to help Medicare payments keep pace with the rising costs of hospital care, and to halt further Medicare reductions to teaching hospitals.

Our hospitals are under tremendous strain. They face soaring costs from nearly every direction: The growing number of uninsured individuals coupled with the devastating shortages of skilled health care workers. The struggle to afford skyrocketing pharmaceuticals prices, while simultaneously investing in emerging needs, such as information technology. At the same time, reductions in Medicare payments have hindered hospitals' ability to respond to these increased demands. How can we expect patients to receive quality health care when we're asking our hospitals to do more with so much less?

As you know, this week we are focusing on the crisis around the shortage of nurses. Ninety-one percent of hospitals in New York State report shortages of registered nurses, RNs. But this is really just the tip of the iceberg. The shortages in the health care workforce permeate the entire health care system, especially our hospitals. There are shortages in pharmacists, technicians, nurse aides, billing staff, and housekeepers that have all negatively impacted the quality of care New Yorkers are able to receive.

As a representative of the State of New York, I am especially troubled by the growing strains that our hospitals have been forced to contend with on top of the devastating cuts that have resulted from the balanced budget agreement of 1997, BBA. I have heard numerous firsthand accounts of the adverse impact on New York hospitals and the facts speak for themselves: In the 2 years following the BBA, New York hospitals' financial health ranked worst in the Nation. In fact, almost two-thirds of New York hospitals had negative operating margins last year. And in addition to the workforce shortage affecting health providers nationwide, New York providers are also confronting labor costs increases of 5-7 percent a year, while the Medicare rates for inpatient hospital rates, even with the full market basket update we are seeking in today's legislation, expected to rise only around 3.1 percent.

In recent years, Congress has successfully provided some short-term relief to address areas where the cuts enacted in the BBA of 1997 went much further than intended. However, much of the relief merely postponed scheduled cuts in Medicare payments and that is why the legislation that we are introducing today is so important.

This legislation today would eliminate some of those previously delayed cuts. First, it would restore the market

basket update for inpatient hospital rates to the full level, rather than market-basket minus 0.55 percent, as scheduled for fiscal year 2002 and 2003. This important step will help hospitals nationwide keep up with the rising costs of inpatient care for Medicare beneficiaries. This provision helps all hospitals in New York State by increasing inpatient hospital payments across the board.

I am especially pleased that this legislation would also address the cuts faced by teaching hospitals to their Medicare indirect medical education payments. Teaching hospitals are the crown jewels of our Nation's health care system and play a vital role in making our system one of the finest in the world.

We rely on them to train physicians and nurses, care for the sickest of the sick and the poorest of the poor, and engage in research and clinical trials. Thanks to the research, for example, at Memorial Sloan-Kettering, cancer patients will suffer less while receiving chemotherapy because of a drug that was developed there.

As my predecessor and friend, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, in whose footsteps I am so honored to be following, put it so well a few years ago, "We are in the midst of a great era of discovery in the medical science. It is certainly not a time to close medical schools. This great era of medical discovery is occurring right here in the United States . . . And it is centered in New York City."

This legislation that we are introducing today would address the cuts faced by teaching hospitals to their Medicare indirect medical education payments. Last year's Medicare, Medicaid, and SCHIP Benefits Improvement Act of 2000, BIPA, provided some relief by delaying the cuts to help teaching hospitals cover the costs of caring for sicker, more complicated patients. Today's provision would make that relief permanent by freezing the indirect medical education adjustments percentage at 6.5 percent.

In addition, teaching hospitals throughout the State would benefit, including rural hospitals such as Kingston Hospital, Benedictine Hospital, Champlain Valley Physicians Hospital Medical Center, Olean General Hospital, and Hepburn Medical Center in Ogdensburg, NY.

Today's legislation is essential to ensuring that our Nation's older and disabled patients can continue to receive the high quality of care that they deserve. I look forward to working with my colleagues and the administration to address this and other important health care priorities.

REMEMBERING ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. DAYTON. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize that May is Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, and I want to acknowledge the many ac-

complishments and contributions that people of Asian and Pacific Island descent have made to Minnesota and to our country.

Their many different talents, cultures, and histories have played important roles in building and strengthening our country, and they have exemplified the important traditions of hard work, respect for family and elders, and the value of a quality education.

Since their arrival in this country, they have believed strongly in the American Dream and in better opportunities for those who seek them. These qualities have enabled them to overcome adversity and discrimination, and allowed them to achieve enormous successes in virtually every field.

The complexion of my home state of Minnesota is changing dramatically. We have seen a sharp increase in the number of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders who reside in our state, and we welcome the opportunity to continue to work with them to create a better Minnesota.

In one of my first meetings as a new Senator, I had the opportunity to visit with the Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans, and I learned of the many important contributions which this community makes to my home state. They shared with me not only their successes, but also their continuing struggles to ensure that Minnesotans of Asian and Pacific Island descent have the best education, housing, health care, and job opportunities possible.

I would like to acknowledge just a few of the Minnesotans of Asian or Pacific Island descent whose efforts have made Minnesota a better place to live and work. In the political arena, the Honorable Satveer Chaudhary became the first Asian American to be elected to the Minnesota state legislature and now serves as the highest-ranking elected official of Indian descent in the nation. Ms. Zarina Baber helped establish the volunteer based clinic in Fridley known as Al'Shifa, which provides culturally specific health care free of charge to needy or uninsured patients. Ms. Baber volunteers as the director of this clinic and has developed partnerships with area hospitals and clinics. Mr. Lee Pao Xiong recently became the first non-African American President of Minneapolis' Urban Coalition. He has served on President Clinton's Commission on Asian and Pacific Islanders, and has been a leader in helping the Hmong community to make the transition to mainstream America while preserving the integrity of their own culture. Wai Lee, a devoted mother of four, as well as an active member of the Faribault community, has skillfully combined motherhood with activism. She has volunteered in the Faribault community for many years, taught English as a Second Language, and developed a mentor program to involve children and help them with their English skills. Venture

Crew 6, a community organization made up of Asian youth leaders, is working to make Minnesota a better place to live and train young people to be future leaders. The group's mission is to help Minnesota youth grow, develop, and foster leadership skills while serving their communities. The members, made up of traditional and "at risk" youth, lend a hand to the state's elderly, and provide a variety of other volunteer services in several Minnesota communities.

There are many other women and men who belong on this "Honor Role" of outstanding Minnesotans. During this month, we should all take time to remind ourselves of the important contributions made to our society by those of Asian American and Pacific Island descent, who bring with them rich cultures, desire for growth and opportunity, and the chance to achieve the American dream.

EXPORT PROMOTION PROGRAMS

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to address the issue of U.S. trade policy, in particular the funds directed toward export promotion in the Bush administration fiscal year 2002 budget.

Until only recently, the United States had been experiencing the largest period of sustained economic growth in our history, with over 20 million jobs created, the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, the lowest poverty rate in 20 years, and substantial increases in gross domestic product and productivity. According to nearly every analyst, there is a direct correlation between increased international trade and these statistics, with exporting firms and workers contributing as much as 30 percent to our economic growth. Exports in U.S. goods and services have risen by almost 50 percent over the last eight years. This translates into increased international sales for business of all sizes, increased opportunities for high-wage employment, and enhanced economic security for Americans.

Significantly, our trade policy over the last 8 years has included tangible resources directed toward export promotion initiatives, the primary goal being to ensure that exporters, large, medium, and small, could take advantage of market opportunities occurring as a result of international trade negotiations and market liberalization. Included in this trade strategy were a range of policy programs, from trade promotion and financing, to market monitoring and compliance, to database creation and business counseling, all of which were specifically designed to ensure that U.S. firms of all sizes had the information they needed, that they were positioned to take advantage of foreign markets, and, in this manner, that we could unlock the full potential of our national economy.

As I examine the current budget I am concerned that this commitment to export promotion has weakened signifi-

cantly under the new administration. Given the rapid changes occurring in the international political economy, I am concerned that the administration is ignoring the challenges U.S. firms now face with their competition. Given the emphasis placed on these programs by foreign governments at this time, I am concerned about the effect this change will have on the level of our exports. Given the state of our economy at this time, I am concerned this will simply be another factor contributing to a decline in economic growth.

Let me give some specific examples of the budget cuts I am referring to. Based on the budget numbers provided by President Bush: Funding for the Trade Development Program, which performs trade investment analyses, works with firms to identify and capitalize on overseas trade opportunities, and conducts export promotion programs, will decrease from \$66 million last year to \$52 million this year. Funding for the Market Access and Compliance Program, which monitors foreign country compliance with multilateral and bilateral trade agreements, will decrease from \$33 million last year to \$28 million this year. Funding for the U.S. Foreign and Commercial Services, which maintains databases on markets overseas and counsels U.S. firms on export opportunities, will decrease from \$199 million last year to \$194 million this year. Funding for the Export-Import Bank, which provides export financing for U.S. companies, will decrease from \$865 million last year to \$633 million this year. Funding for the International Trade Administration, whose primary goal is to expand opportunities for sales by U.S. firms in foreign markets, falls from \$364 million last year to \$361 million this year.

From where I stand, we should not be cutting back on funding for these programs. On the contrary, we should increase funds for programs designed to translate American productivity, vitality, and ingenuity into sales overseas. Unfortunately, what we see here is a policy that runs contrary to the needs of our own country, and, significantly, the policies of most countries in the global trading system. The Bush administration trade policy incorrectly assumes that market imperfections do not exist, and that assistance to firms represents interference in the way the market works. If you look around the world and examine the trade and export policies of other countries, you will see this policy is an anomaly.

If you go down the list of our trading partners anywhere in the world—be it Japan, France, Canada, Mexico, or Brazil—all consider the exports of their goods and services to be a top government priority, and, according to the U.S. Commerce Department, contribute substantial resources, both human and financial, to this goal. The most recent data available shows that the United States ranks dead last among a group of our trading partners,

measured in terms of spending on export promotion as a percentage of GDP. And these data were calculated prior to the fiscal year 2002 budget cuts by the Bush Administration. All of these countries—France, Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK, Korea, Spain, Sweden, and the Netherlands—understand that trade is not an end in and of itself, but one of the tools by which governments can raise the living standards of its people.

In his nomination testimony before the Finance Committee in January, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick stated that President Bush assigned a high priority to trade policy as part of his domestic and international agenda. He argued at that time that trade policy is important not only because it incrementally improves the economic welfare of all Americans, but also because it shapes the basic framework of the international system. Through international trade we not only export goods and services, we also export democratic values and stability.

I agree with this statement. But my concern is that the Bush Administration is committed to this kind of trade policy in rhetoric alone. Their budget for export promotion activities suggests that they are unwilling to back up their words with substance—in this case, real funding for the programs that do the work needed to help U.S. firms. From where I sit, it is essential that the United States fund these programs so American business can continue to act as an engine of growth for the country. I am convinced that there is a national economic interest, tangible and beneficial, that needs to be pursued in an effective manner by the United States. While I accept the notion of free markets, I believe there are imperfections and biases in the international trading system that necessitate a commitment of resources to trade and export policy.

President Bush has argued that he has focused on the people's priorities in his budget and put first things first. I would argue that his trade policy—the resources directed toward export promotion policy in particular—are simply another example of the fundamental flaws in his strategic goals for the country. There is still time to make a change in direction. There is still time to fund the programs that have done so much for American businesses and the American people. I urge the Administration to reconsider the funding levels for these programs, and bring them back to the appropriate level.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Monday, May 7, 2001, the Federal debt stood at \$5,643,605,408,260.92. Five trillion, six hundred forty-three billion, six hundred five million, four hundred eight thousand, two hundred sixty dollars and ninety-two cents.