

unemployment rate of 8 percent. Extension of unemployment benefits is critical for many Oregonians who are in jeopardy of running out of benefits if they are not extended before the end of the year. In order to ensure unemployed workers in Oregon and many other states will not be left without benefits, I am objecting to unanimous consent on S. 1896 or H.R. 1664, unless extension of unemployment benefits and reform of a lookback rule that affects Oregon and other high unemployment states is included as part of the legislation.

REPEALING THE MEDICARE PHYSICIAN FEE CUT

Mr. GRAHAM of South Carolina. Mr. President, I express my support for repealing the Medicare physician fee cut. The issue of reimbursements for physicians who treat Medicare patients has been an ongoing battle. Currently, these reimbursements are inadequate and inefficiently paid through a bureaucratic system. Some physicians have been even forced to refuse Medicare recipients due to these inappropriate reimbursement levels. With so many Medicare recipients who need medical services in South Carolina, the situation with low reimbursements poses a challenge to both physicians and patients.

I have supported updating and increasing the reimbursements physicians receive under the Medicare program. The schedule of fee cuts for these reimbursements has been temporarily suspended due to the actions of Congress. I supported legislation to repeal physician fee cuts for both fiscal year 2002 and 2003. However, in October 2003, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, CMS, reported that the physician fee cut for 2004 would be 4.5 percent. This necessitates a further repeal to ensure this fee cut does not move forward.

While annual repeals of the physician fee cuts are vital, I also support a substantive change to the reimbursement calculations so physicians are not held in limbo each year regarding their fee updates. I am hopeful that Congress will address this issue in a comprehensive manner.

Since I support legislative action to make sure this cut is repealed and to ensure future repeals are dealt with effectively, I am exceedingly concerned that the most current repeal in the Medicare physician fee cut is contained within the mammoth Medicare prescription drug bill. This blocks me voting solely on the merit of the repeal.

I have many reasons as to why I plan to oppose the Medicare prescription drug bill conference report. None of my reasons are concerns with the Medicare physician fee cut repeal. Rather, my opposition stems from the lack of real cost containment of the program, exclusion of true Medicare reform, the weakening of the premium support issue, the treatment of "dual eligibles"

coverage, and other issues related to oncology drugs, durable medical equipment, DME, and local pharmacies.

It frustrates me that this latest repeal is in a bill with literally dozens of other Medicare provisions in a \$400 billion dollar bill. While I cannot support the Medicare prescription drug bill, I will continue to support the repeal of next year's Medicare physician fee cut and addressing the ongoing issue of fee cuts in a comprehensive manner. I am hopeful that our leadership will give us a vehicle for a straight up or down vote on this issue.

A TRIBUTE TO RALPH BUNCHE

Mr. SARBANES. Mr. President, it is difficult to know exactly how to pay tribute to Ralph J. Bunche for his extraordinary contributions to scholarship, diplomacy, civil rights, social justice and international cooperation and development. The Senate has approved H. Con. Res 71, "Recognizing the importance of Ralph Bunche as one of the great leaders of the United States . . . The year-long centennial commemoration of his birth, which is now well underway, involves many more professional societies, educational institutions and public-policy organizations than it is possible to list; among them are the American Political Science Association, the Association of Black American Ambassadors, the American Library Association, the Council on Foreign Relations, Facing History and Ourselves, national foundation, the NAACP, the National Urban League, the New York Public Library, numerous United Nations Associations and dozens of colleges and universities in this country and abroad. At UCLA, Ralph Bunche's alma mater, the African American Studies center has been renamed in his honor. I am especially pleased to note that the American Academy of Diplomacy has chosen to honor Ralph Bunche by sponsoring the two-year Philip Merrill Fellowship for the two-year M.A. program at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies of Johns Hopkins University.

Among his many accomplishments, Ralph Bunche received the first doctoral degree in government and international relations ever awarded by Harvard University, thereby earning the title "Dr. Bunche." But Benjamin Rivlin, who is Co-Chair of the Ralph Bunche Centenary Committee, has told us that he was specifically instructed to "cut out this doctor business" when as a young soldier he was assigned to work for Ralph Bunche in the OSS sixty years ago.

The vast array of tributes now being paid to Ralph Bunche reflects just how extraordinary a person he was. Born in Detroit and orphaned at eleven, he went to live with his grandmother, Lucy Johnson, in what is today the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles.

By all accounts, Lucy Johnson was as extraordinary as her illustrious grand-

son. Writing in the Reader's Digest many years after her death, Dr. Bunche called her "My Most Unforgettable Character . . . Caucasian 'on the outside' and 'all black fervor inside.'" One of his teachers said of her, "I have never forgotten the emanation of power from that tiny figure." Ms. Johnson's remark to the principal of Jefferson High School, where Dr. Johnson was valedictorian of his class and a varsity athlete, is especially memorable. In a disastrously misguided effort at flattery, the principal is reported to have said, "We never thought of Ralph as a Negro," to which Ms. Johnson replied: "Why haven't you thought of him as a Negro? He is a Negro and he is proud of it. So am I."

From his grandmother Ralph Bunche learned the fundamental lessons of self-respect and respect for others. He also took from her a passion for education. It was she who insisted that he go to UCLA, where he majored in international relations and was valedictorian of the Class of 1927. Upon his graduation from UCLA, Bunche received a fellowship for graduate study in political science at Harvard. Shortly after enrolling he received what was to be his grandmother's last letter. Writing just a week before her death, she asked, "Will you finish at Harvard this year?"

Ralph Bunche did indeed receive his Master's degree at the end of that year, but he did much more. In the small African American community at Harvard at that time he made lifelong friendships with, among others, the future Judge William Hastie and the future cabinet member Robert Weaver. He completed his Ph.D. in 1934, receiving the government department's annual award for the best dissertation. And while working toward his degree he also taught at Howard University—America's "black Athens"—where he helped organize the political science department at a time when, according to Kenneth Clark, the distinguished psychologist who was a student at the time, "the seeds of a legal and constitutional attack on racial segregation were being sown in the intellectual soil of Howard University."

Although bent on an academic career, Ralph Bunche postponed research in South Africa to work closely with Gunnar Myrdal on Myrdal's historic and highly influential study of race in this country, "An American Dilemma." With the outbreak of World War II he was brought into the newly-established OSS for his expertise on Africa, and in 1944 he moved on to the State Department. The following year he served as an advisor to the American delegation at the San Francisco Conference, where the Charter establishing the United Nations was signed, and in 1946 he joined the U.N. Secretariat, where he remained until shortly before his death. As Brian Urquhart, who first went to work for Ralph Bunche in the U.N. Secretariat in 1954, later observed, "Public service had

called him, and he responded with all of his ability and strength.”

Ralph Bunche went on to become the U.N. Undersecretary-General, but he is probably best remembered as the recipient of the 1950 Nobel Peace Prize, which he was awarded for negotiating the armistice that ended military hostilities between the new State of Israel and its enemies. He was not only the first African American to receive the prize, he was also the first person of color; as an American, he joined the distinguished community of U.S. laureates that included Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, Jane Adams and Nicholas Murray Butler.

In his own view, however, the Nobel Prize was not at all his most significant accomplishment, and his initial reaction upon being informed of the award was to decline it: “Peacemaking at the U.N. was not done for prizes,” he explained. He agreed to accept only when the argument was put to him that it would be good for the United Nations. Rather, Ralph Bunche gave a quarter-century of dedicated service to the United Nations, working day in and day out to build and secure harmonious relations among free and prosperous nations.

Ralph Bunche touched the life of everyone who knew him. He is remembered as “brilliant,” with “an uncanny ability to produce stupendous amounts of work over long sustained periods of application;” as someone who “play(ed) to win, but always played fair;” as “a man of extraordinary kindness and compassion (who) never turned his back on those in trouble;” as a person. Kenneth Clark has paid him an eloquent and enduring tribute as “above all the model of a human being who by his total personality demonstrated that disciplined human intelligence and courage were most effective instruments in the struggle for social justice.”

CBO SUMMARY OF S. 1522

Ms. COLLINS. I ask unanimous consent that the following CBO summary of the cost estimate regarding S. 1522 be printed in the RECORD.

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

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE
S. 1522—GAO Human Capital Reform Act of 2003

Summary: S. 1522 would authorize the General Accounting Office (GAO) to modify its

personnel and workforce practices to allow greater flexibility in determining pay increases, pay retention rules, and other compensation matters. The bill also would permanently extend GAO’s authority to offer separation (buyout) payments and early retirement to employees who voluntarily leave GAO. Finally, S. 1522 would rename GAO as the Government Accountability Office.

CBO estimates that enacting S. 1522 would increase direct spending for retirement annuities and related health benefits by about \$1 million in fiscal year 2004, by \$19 million over the 2004–2008 period, and by \$40 million over the 2004–2013 period. Several provisions of S. 1522 could affect GAO employee compensation costs, but the net budgetary effect of such provisions would depend on how GAO exercises its new authorities and on whether future agency appropriations are adjusted to reflect any savings or costs. Finally, we expect that any additional discretionary costs associated with changing the agency’s name would not be significant.

S. 1522 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandate Reform Act (UMRA) and would not affect the budgets of state, local, or tribal governments.

Estimated costs to the Federal Government: The estimated impact of S. 1522 on direct spending is shown in the following table. The costs of this legislation fall within budget function 800 (general government).

	By fiscal year, in millions of dollars—									
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
CHANGES IN DIRECT SPENDING										
Estimated budget authority	1	3	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4
Estimated outlays	1	3	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4

Basis of estimate

Direct spending

S. 1522 would give GAO permanent authority to offer retirement to employees who voluntarily leave the agency early. GAO’s existing buyout authority, which will expire on December 31, 2003, allows the agency to offer certain employees a lump sum payment of up to \$25,000 to voluntarily leave the agency. In addition, certain qualified employees who leave (whether they collect a separation payment or not) are entitled to receive immediate retirement annuities earlier than they would have otherwise. CBO estimates that extending this authority would increase direct spending by \$1 million in 2004, by \$19 million over the 2004–2008 period, and by \$40 million over the 2004–2013 period.

Based on information provided by GAO about use of its early retirement authority over the past several years, CBO estimates that each year about 35 agency employees would begin receiving retirement benefits three years earlier than they would have under current law. Inducing some employees to retire early results in higher-than-expected benefits from the Civil Service Retirement and Disability Fund (CSRDF). CBO estimates that the additional retirement benefits would increase direct spending by \$1 million in 2004, by \$16 million over the 2004–2008 period, and by \$32 million over the 2004–2013 period.

Extending GAO’s buyout and early retirement authority also would increase direct spending for federal retiree health benefits. Many employees who retire early would continue to be eligible for coverage under the Federal Employees’ Health Benefits (FEHB) program. The government’s share of the premium for retirees is classified as mandatory spending. Because many of those accepting the buyouts under the bill would have re-

tired later under current law, mandatory spending on FEHB premiums would increase. CBO estimates these additional benefits would increase direct spending by less than \$500,000 in 2004, by \$3 million over the 2004–2008 period, and by \$8 million over the 2004–2013 period.

Spending subject to appropriation

The authorities provided by S. 1522 would allow GAO to create a performance-based employee compensation system to govern basic pay adjustments, pay retention for employees affected by reductions in force, relocation reimbursements, and annual leave accruals beginning in fiscal year 2006. (Under existing law, GAO is required to follow personnel management policies determined by the Office of Personnel Management.) Implementing the new authorities that would be provided by S. 1522 could affect GAO’s total costs of providing employee compensation, but CBO cannot predict any cost or saving associated with these new authorities, or the net effect of all such changes on the Federal budget. Ultimately, the net budgetary effect of the proposed authorities would depend on the features of the compensation system adopted by GAO and on how the agency applies that new system to individual employees. Moreover, any resulting savings or costs would only be realized if the agency’s annual appropriations are adjusted accordingly.

Providing GAO with the option of providing voluntary separation payments could also increase GAO’s costs, but CBO estimates that any new costs would average less than \$500,000 annually over the 2004–2013 period. Section 2 of the bill would allow GAO to offer certain employees payments of up to \$25,000 to voluntarily leave the agency. The bill also requires that GAO make a deposit amounting to 45 percent of each buyout recipient’s basic salary toward the CSRDF.

Unlike an increase in retirement benefits, these two payments would be from the agency’s discretionary budget and are thus subject to appropriation. Since GAO’s current buyout authority was first authorized in October 2000, no one at the agency has received a buyout payment. As such, CBO expects that relatively few employees would receive a buyout payment over the next 10 years and that the cost of any buyout payments and required deposits toward the CSRDF would be negligible in any given year.

Intergovernmental and private-sector impact: S. 1522 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in UMRA and would not affect the budgets of State, local, or tribal governments.

Estimate prepared by: Federal Costs: Ellen Hays, Geoffrey Gerhardt, and Deborah Reis. Impact on State, Local, and Tribal Governments: Sarah Puro. Impact on the Private Sector: Paige Piper/Bach.

Estimate approved by: Peter H. Fontaine, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.

GROUP OF EIGHT

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss a matter of great importance related to Russia’s continued participation in the Group of Eight, or G–8. Senator McCain and I submitted today a resolution calling on the President of the United States and the Secretary of State to work with our partners in the G–8 to condition Russia’s continued involvement on its meetings the basic norms and standards of a democratic government.

The G–8 is a gathering of the world’s wealthiest industrial democracies. It is