

NICS IMPROVEMENT
AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. JOHN D. DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 19, 2007

Mr. DINGELL. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation, which makes a number of important improvements to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System. Congresswoman MCCARTHY and I first offered this legislation in 2002, when it became obvious to us that the NICS System was not working as Congress had intended it to. Those shortcomings were highlighted earlier this year when a gunman with a history of mental illness shot and killed 32 people and wounded many more. Cho Sun Hui had been adjudicated mentally ill by the state of Virginia, and under the law should not have been able to purchase the guns he used to kill his classmates. This legislation will ensure that individuals like Cho Sun Hui are included in the NICS database.

This legislation will also benefit lawful gun purchasers, many of whom face unnecessary delays when waiting for their background check to be completed. For the first time since the creation of NICS, it will live up to its name and be both national and instant. It also benefits those who have been wrongfully included in the NICS database by providing a mechanism for petitioning the government for removal from the system. This is an important improvement which will strengthen the second amendment rights of all Americans.

There are many people who should be thanked for their hard work on this bill, but I would like to take just a moment to recognize a few of those people. Representative CAROLYN MCCARTHY and I have worked on NICS improvement legislation for a few years now and while most would say we are an odd pair when it comes to this particular issue, I would suggest we are just two legislators trying to fix a legitimate problem. I have tremendous respect for Representative MCCARTHY; it has been an honor and privilege to work with her. I would also like to thank Senator CHUCK SCHUMER for his hard work and dedication. Also, I would like to extend my appreciation to Senators CRAIG and HATCH, as well as Representatives CONYERS and LAMAR SMITH. Lastly, I would like to thank the National Rifle Association. The NRA's support for this legislation has been invaluable and is a testament to the NRA's commitment to passing sensible and responsible legislation to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and the mentally ill.

MEDICARE, MEDICAID, AND SCHIP
EXTENSION ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. MICHAEL N. CASTLE

OF DELAWARE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 19, 2007

Mr. CASTLE. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 2499, the Medicare, Medicaid, and State Children's Health Insurance Program Extension Act of 2007. The measure includes an important, albeit limited, delay of the

scheduled 10 percent cut to Medicare's physician payment rates, which will help ensure quality care and access for Medicare patients without the cuts to vital Medicare programs I opposed previously. While not the expansion to reach an additional 4 million children I had hoped for, S. 2449 also extends the authorization for the State Children's Health Insurance Program until March 31, 2009, ensuring the needs of the 6 million children currently enrolled are met. I hope Congress will again forge ahead and continue negotiations to reach more of these eligible and uninsured children.

As co-chair of the Congressional Diabetes Caucus, I was extremely pleased to see the reauthorization of the Special Diabetes Program to fund type 1 diabetes research and type 2 treatment and prevention programs for Native Americans and Alaska Natives included in S. 2449. I am the lead Republican sponsor, with my colleague Representative DIANA DEGETTE, of legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives, H.R. 2762, to reauthorize the Special Diabetes Program for Type I Research and the Special Diabetes Program for Indians for 5 years and to increase the authorized funding level to \$200 million annually for each program. While a long-term extension is needed, in this difficult budget environment a short-term extension is a step in the right direction and I will continue to work next year with my colleagues to finish the job and secure a multi-year renewal so the critical long-term projects supported by this program can continue.

Since their creation in 1997, the Special Diabetes Programs have led to research breakthroughs through the Special Diabetes Program for Type 1 Research and have increased diabetes treatment and prevention programs for Native Americans and Alaska Natives through the Special Diabetes Program for Indians. Before this time, efforts on both fronts were in short supply. The Special Diabetes Programs have been reauthorized twice and have enjoyed broad bipartisan support in both the House and Senate; and H.R. 2762 continues in this spirit with 225 cosponsors.

The reauthorization of the Special Diabetes Programs is vitally important and an extension to September 30, 2009 is welcome.

With over 20 million adults and children in the U.S. affected by diabetes, the cost to the U.S. economy is estimated at \$132 billion per year in direct and indirect medical costs alone. Continued funding of the Special Diabetes Programs will ensure that the Federal effort to combat diabetes remains strong, as we ardently work to ensure that accelerated diabetes research, treatment, and prevention efforts with on the ground results in improving the lives of millions of people burdened with diabetes continue. I will continue to push for a longer extension of the Special Diabetes Programs.

ENERGY INDEPENDENCE AND
SECURITY ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. BARON P. HILL

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 19, 2007

Mr. HILL. Mr. Speaker, Congress has sent a clear message to the American people that

it is time for Government to raise CAFE standards for the first time in 32 years. We have worked very hard during the past year—negotiating language to increase the statutory standards by 40 percent. It is important that the entire Federal Government follow the guidelines set forth in H.R. 6 in order to provide regulatory certainty for the domestic auto industry, including manufacturers, suppliers, and dealers.

CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY
MODERNIZATION ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. JOHN D. DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 19, 2007

Mr. DINGELL. Madam Speaker, I am submitting the following remarks for the record on H.R. 4040, the Consumer Product Safety Modernization Act of 2007, as clarification of House Report 110–501 to accompany the bill H.R. 4040, and which shall be considered part of the legislative history of this bill.

H.R. 4040 was ordered favorably reported to the House, amended, by the Committee on Energy and Commerce on December 18, 2007, by a recorded vote of 51 yeas and 0 nays. This landmark legislation, which enjoys broad, bipartisan support, was brought up before the House the next day, December 19. In light of this expedited consideration, the Committee was forced to file its report on an accelerated schedule. The following remarks are offered to clarify the Committee's intent with respect to certain provisions of H.R. 4040.

Section 101 establishes a Federal ban on lead in children's products beyond specified minute amounts, with section 101(a) addressing lead content in children's products. The intent of the Committee in providing a defined limit by weight is to establish a standard that is readily understood and easier to monitor for compliance. The Committee's primary goal is to provide standards that eliminate children's exposure to lead from toys and other children's products, and thereby further reduce the potential for harm to children's health.

The exception in paragraph (6) for inaccessible component parts that are contained in sealed coverings and casings is intended primarily for sealed electronic devices where component electrical parts and lead solder are necessary for the device to function.

Subsection (b) applies to lead paint in children's products. The alternative measure provided for in paragraph (1)(C) is intended to enable the Consumer Product Safety Commission, CPSC, to inspect more products and enforce the paint levels in less time than would otherwise occur if they were confined to testing products in the agency's laboratory.

In administering subsection (c), which gives the CPSC authority to extend, by rule, the implementation period for the new lead standards for an additional 180 days, the Committee expects the CPSC to give careful consideration to the effect on small- and medium-sized enterprises. The Committee intends for the agency to put the public health and safety first, but within that construct also to work with small- and medium-sized enterprises that may be disproportionately affected to help them to achieve compliance in a timely manner. In

general, this section is intended to authorize the granting of a modest time extension for manufacturers encountering unexpected technical or technological challenges in complying with the lead standard. The Committee expects that manufacturers will apply for waivers on a product-by-product or class-by-class basis, and that CPSC will carefully evaluate each application to ensure that any extension will have no adverse health or safety impact.

Section 102 establishes requirements for mandatory third-party testing for certain children's products. The Committee intends for these requirements to be vigorously enforced, but it does not intend the provision to be interpreted to require unnecessary duplicative testing.

Section 103 requires manufacturers to place distinguishing marks, to the extent feasible, on both children's products and their packaging that specify the location and date of production of such products. The Committee intends for this provision to aid in determining the origin of the product through the supply chain and the possible cause of the recall. The Committee believes that this will facilitate accurate identification of products subject to a recall so that consumers, retailers, and others throughout the chain may expeditiously remove the product from their homes and the stream of commerce. The Committee does not intend for the date requirement to impose an obligation for a daily date change, but may include an indication of a period of time if such label will accurately identify the product in the event of a recall.

Section 107 directs the CPSC to examine the effectiveness of the current voluntary standard that governs a wide variety of hazards that could be presented by children's toys. The Committee is disturbed by the large number of recalls this year, and expects this review to be undertaken diligently to determine the effectiveness of the applicable standards, the relevant risks of injury and the available injury data, and the need for mandatory standards and third-party testing, as appropriate. The Committee believes that small powerful magnets present a serious hazard to children and should be a high priority for CPSC action.

Section 201 authorizes increased funding levels for the CPSC to enable the agency, among other things, to attract and retain talented and experienced personnel in order to carry out its important mission effectively. The Committee urges that, to attract talented scientists in the various disciplines necessary to achieve that goal, the CPSC will encourage scientific staff to seek appropriate publishing opportunities in peer-reviewed journals and other media. To that end, the Committee expects the CPSC to adopt, within a few months after enactment of this legislation, an internal policy that encourages such publication and sets forth appropriate guidelines and timeframes for management review and consideration of staff requests for clearance to publish. The Committee intends to conduct oversight of the CPSC publication policy and practices as part of its review of the CPSC's performance of its mission.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF SENATE AMENDMENT TO HOUSE AMENDMENT TO SENATE AMENDMENT TO H.R. 2764, CONSOLIDATED APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2008

SPEECH OF

HON. CHET EDWARDS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 19, 2007

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, the fiscal year 2008 Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs amended appropriations bill includes funding for H.R. 2642, the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2008.

This amended bill sends a clear message to America's service men and women, their families, and our veterans that a grateful Nation deeply respects their service and sacrifice. This bill says to all who have served that just as you have kept your promises to this country, we intend to keep our promises to you.

Overall the bill totals \$63.9 billion, of which \$3.7 billion is contingent emergency funding. It provides the largest increase in VA health care funding in the 77-year history of the VA. These additional funds allow the Veterans Health Administration to hire more doctors and nurses; provide case managers for veterans with traumatic injuries; improve mental health care and PTSD services; increase access to medical services for members of the National Guard and Reserve forces in rural areas; modernize hospitals and clinics; increase the number of beds available for homeless veterans; and increase medical research. The additional funds also allow for an increase in beneficiary travel reimbursement, the first such increase since 1979.

The Veterans Health Administration, which includes Medical Services, Medical Administration, Medical Facilities, and Medical Research, is funded at \$37.2 billion, \$2.6 billion more than the President's request. These funds will mean expanded care, shorter wait times, and safer facilities for our veterans.

In addition to medical care, the bill provides funds to hire 1,800 new claims processors to reduce the serious backlog of benefits claims and reduce the time to process new claims. These were complaints the subcommittee heard repeatedly from many different sources and we took action.

On the Military Construction side, this bill also supports our active duty and Guard and Reserve service men and women and their families. The bill provides \$20.6 billion for military construction, family housing, and BRAC.

I am particularly proud of what we were able to do in this bill for families. Every year when the highest ranking non-commissioned officers testify before our subcommittee, we ask them to give us the top three quality of life issues facing military families. Child care is on every service's list and generally ranked as number one. That is why I am excited that we were able to fund 16 child care centers, 13 more than the President requested in his budget. We listened to the top non-commissioned officers, military families, and support groups, such as the National Military Family Association, and did our best to address their concerns.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the ranking member of the subcommittee, Roger Wicker. His input and advice was invaluable in constructing this bill and our service men and women, their families, and our veterans are better served due to his leadership. I also want to thank the staff of the subcommittee, Carol Murphy, Tim Peterson, Walter Hearne, Donna Shahbaz, and Mary Arnold with the majority and Liz Dawson and Dena Baron with the minority. They have worked many long days and nights throughout the year putting this bill together and working with the Departments to ensure we have met our military and veterans most critical needs. Finally, I want to thank John Conger from my personal staff and Susan Sweat from Mr. Wicker's personal staff.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is a bill we can all be proud to support.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, December 28, 2007

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Madam Speaker, unfortunately, I was unable to travel to Washington, DC, for votes during the week of December 17, 2007.

However, I would have recorded the following votes on the rollcall votes which I missed. They included:

DECEMBER 17, 2007

(1) H. Res. 856—Rollcall No. 1163—Expressing the heartfelt sympathy for the victims and families of the shootings in Omaha, Nebraska, on Wednesday, December 5, 2007—"yes."

(2) H. Res. 851—Rollcall No. 1164—Honoring local and state first responders, and the citizens of the Pacific Northwest in facing the severe winter storm of December 2 and 3, 2007—"yes."

(3) Previous Question—Rollcall No. 1165—On ordering the previous question to H. Res. 873—"yes."

(4) H. Res. 873—Rollcall No. 1166—Waiving a requirement of clause 6(a) of rule XIII with respect to consideration of certain resolutions reported from the Committee on Rules—"yes."

(5) H. Con. Res. 271—Rollcall No. 1167—Providing for the sine die adjournment of the first session of the One Hundred Tenth Congress—"no."

(6) Previous Question—Rollcall No. 1168—On ordering the previous question to H. Res. 878—"yes."

(7) H. Res. 878—Rollcall No. 1169—Providing for the consideration of the Senate amendment to the bill (H.R. 2764) making appropriations for the Department of State, foreign operations, and related programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes—"yes."

(8) H.R. 4286—Rollcall No. 1170—To award a congressional gold medal to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in recognition of her courageous and unwavering commitment to peace, non-violence, human rights, and democracy in Burma—"yes."

(9) 1st Senate Amendment to H.R. 2764—Rollcall No. 1171—On motion to agree to the Senate amendment with the 1st House amendment—"yes."