

interaction that I've talked about several times tonight? Well, there are several ways. Number one, in just having the availability and the access of a physician. You can't deliver value to the doctor-patient interaction if you don't have a doctor there to interact with the patient. So that is certainly one very fundamental way that it can improve it. But another way, and perhaps a less tangible way, is if a doctor goes into practice within 50 miles of where they did their training, what do they know about that place? Well, they know the community. Their family, their wives and their children are probably going to be more comfortable in that community, so there is increased job satisfaction that the doctor will have in that community. I'm sorry, I should have said wives or husbands would have in that community. So there is increased personal satisfaction.

But the other thing is, you know the doctors in the area, you know who's good and you know who's not so good. Referral patterns that are established during a 3- or 4-year residency can be continued. And this is the additional value that this type of training will bring to our young physicians in the State and allow them to be better physicians when the time comes for them to begin their practice.

The final bill, 2585, deals with a problem that we've had in this Congress for as long as I've been here, in fact, before I got here, and that is the problem that we have with reimbursing physicians in the Medicare system. The current Medicare system of pricing is one that is not based on any sort of reality. Hospitals, drug companies, HMOs each get sort of a cost-of-living adjustment every year for their funding sources; but physicians, for whatever reason, don't get that cost-of-living adjustment. They don't get what's called the Medical Economic Index. What they get is called the Sustainable Growth Rate Formula, which generally pushes their reimbursement rates down year over year. And over the next 10 years time, the budgetary projection is for physician payment rates for Medicare patients to be reduced on the order of 30-38 percent. Well, that's untenable. No doctor can continue to practice; they can't even plan for their practice. They can't plan for hiring; they can't plan for the purchase of new equipment all of the time they're laboring under that type of restriction.

2585 would repeal the Sustainable Growth Rate Formula in 2 years' time. It resets the baseline for 2008 and 2009, which does allow for a positive update for physicians in 2008 and 2009, with no smoke and mirrors, no fancy footwork. It is just something that could be done.

And then we aggregate all of the savings that accrue to the Medicare system because we are doing things better, cheaper, and faster in the Medicare system currently. As a consequence, that savings can be used to offset what is described as the cost of repealing the

Sustainable Growth Rate Formula over 10 years' time.

Consider this, the Medicare Trustees Report from last June said that the bad news is Medicare is still going broke, but the good news is it's going to go broke a year later than we told you last year. The reason for that is 600,000 hospital beds were not filled last year because doctors are doing things better in their practices, they are keeping patients out of the hospital, they are doing procedures in an ambulatory surgery center; and as a consequence, the overall cost price pressure on the Medicare system has reduced. The problem is that doctors don't get to have any credit for that reduction. It all goes to the hospitals, drug companies, nursing homes and HMOs, not to the part B of Medicare, which is, after all, where physicians are paid.

We need to change this. We need to make those savings only attributable to part B. And as a consequence, we can drive down the cost of repealing the Sustainable Growth Rate Formula. And by postponing that repeal for 2 years' time, but at the same time providing a positive update for 2008 and 2009, I believe we have a system in place that can be a win-win for Congress, for doctors, and for the American patient, the Medicare patient, who has increased difficulty with finding a Medicare physician.

Two other proposals in that bill, 2585, would be to provide positive updates for doctors who voluntarily improve information technology in their offices. We all know this is something that is going to have to happen. This is something that is going to have to occur. Let's give a little bit of a positive update, a little bit of a positive bonus. Yes, patients who aren't in the Medicare system will also benefit from that, but we're not getting a tremendous amount, about a 3 percent bonus per year for voluntary improvements in health information technology.

Let's also make available for physicians who voluntarily report quality measures, let's also make a positive update available for them as well. And the consequences of that is people will begin to focus on the quality aspect if you just simply make a physician aware of what their expenditures in the Medicare system were for the past year. That information is confidential. It's not something that's published; other people aren't aware of it. But doctors tend to be relatively competitive, and if they have that number available to them, they are likely to behave in a way that will try to drive that number down. Doctors are goal-directed, doctors are competitive, doctors want to be the best at what they are. Well, let's give them the data and see if they can't compete on that level.

The other thing is I think we need to make that information available to the patient as well: What did it cost the patient to provide for the treatment over the cycle of care for the past year? And, again, these are less defined, but

equally important, ways we can begin to deliver value to that doctor-patient interaction.

The health information technology is so important. Many doctors are sitting on the sidelines right now. It's like buying a VCR in the mid-1980s: Do you go with Beta or VHS? And it's hard to know what the technology is going to look like in 5 years; and the person who guesses right will be rewarded, the person who guesses wrong will be penalized.

So there is a lot of tension, a lot of nervousness out there when you talk to physicians' offices. And there is no question about it, these things add a lot of time to the doctor's day, time that is not readily compensated in any other formula. So we need to consider adding that positive update, such as was done in H.R. 2585.

Well, Madam Speaker, we cannot rise to the transformational change required in this country without keeping the best doctors involved and without incentivizing and training the best doctors for tomorrow. This is going to require a near-term, a mid-term and a far-term, a long-term strategy. We will not be able to master the transformational changes and challenges without America's best and brightest still involved in the teaching and in the practice of medicine.

This is a bipartisan issue. It doesn't affect only one side of the aisle. It doesn't only affect the other side of the aisle. It requires each of us to work together.

Madam Speaker, I will submit our congressional approval ratings right now are at historic lows; and the reason they're at historic lows is not for the reason that most people think up here. The reason they're at historic lows is because we won't work together to get a single thing done for the American people, and this is one of those things that they want done.

Now, I left my beloved profession a little over 4 years ago to come and serve here in Congress. I didn't come to just sit and watch as things happened and things were brought to us by other people. I came to be actively involved in the process, and I intend to remain involved in the process.

I have outlined numerous solutions here tonight. I am grateful to the leadership on my side for giving me the opportunity to talk about these things and would only submit that there is a great deal more to discuss, and there will be more to come later.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. CARNEY (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today.

Ms. KILPATRICK (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today.

Mr. KLEIN of Florida (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today on account of family medical reasons.

Mr. CONYERS (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today until 7 p.m. on account of travel problems.

Mr. BUYER (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today on account of family illness.

Mr. WAMP (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today on account of a family commitment.

Mr. HULSHOF (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today and October 30 until 3 p.m. on account of personal reasons.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. BISHOP of New York) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. BISHOP of New York, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. ISRAEL, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. CUMMINGS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WATERS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. MICHAUD, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. HARE, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Ms. FOXX) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. POE, for 5 minutes, November 5.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina, for 5 minutes, November 5.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana, for 5 minutes, today and October 30, 31, and November 1.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DENT, for 5 minutes, today.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 43 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, October 30, 2007, at 9 a.m., for morning-hour debate.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

3902. A letter from the Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness, Department of Defense, transmitting Authorization of Captain Sean A. Pybus to wear the insignia of the grade of rear admiral (lower half) in accordance with title 10, United States Code, section 777; to the Committee on Armed Services.

3903. A letter from the Chief Counsel, FEMA, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Suspension of Community Eligibility [Docket No. FEMA-7993] received October 10, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

3904. A letter from the Chief Counsel, FEMA, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Suspension of Community Eligibility [Docket No. FEMA-7991] received October 10, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

3905. A letter from the Assistant Legal Adviser for Treaty Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Copies of international agreements, other than treaties, entered into by the United States, pursuant to 1 U.S.C. 112b; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

3906. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(d) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed license for the manufacture of defense equipment to the Government of Italy (Transmittal No. DDTC 067-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

3907. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(d) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed license for the manufacture of defense equipment to the Government of Canada (Transmittal No. DDTC 083-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

3908. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification of a proposed license for the export of technical data, defense articles and services to the Republic of Korea (Transmittal No. DDTC 070-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

3909. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification of a proposed license for the export of technical data, defense articles and services to the Governments of Germany and the United Kingdom (Transmittal No. DDTC 069-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

3910. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(c) and 36(d) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed manufacturing license agreement for the manufacture of significant military equipment abroad and the export of defense articles and defense services with the Government of Japan (Transmittal No. DDTC 049-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

3911. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(c) and 36(d) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed manufacturing license agreement for the manufacture of significant military equipment abroad and the export of major defense equipment with the Government of Spain (Transmittal No. DDTC 077-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

3912. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of D.C. ACT 17-165, "Energy Efficiency Standards Act of 2007," pursuant to D.C. Code section 1-233(c)(1); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

3913. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of D.C. ACT 17-164, "District of Columbia Free Clinic Captive Insurance Company Establishment Temporary Act of 2007," pursuant to D.C. Code section 1-233(c)(1); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

3914. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of D.C. ACT 17-163, "Closing of a Public Alley in Square 452, S.O. 06-1034 Act of 2007," pursuant to D.C. Code section 1-233(c)(1); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

3915. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of D.C. ACT 17-131, "Homestead Housing Preservation Amendment Act of 2007," pursuant to D.C. Code section 1-233(c)(1); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

3916. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of D.C. ACT 17-132, "Child's Right to Nurse Human Rights Amendment Act of 2007," pursuant to D.C. Code section 1-233(c)(1); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

3917. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of D.C. ACT 17-133, "Bank Charter Modernization Amendment Act of 2007," pursuant to D.C. Code section 1-233(c)(1); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

3918. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of D.C. ACT 17-162, "Quality Teacher Incentive Clarification Act of 2007," pursuant to D.C. Code section 1-233(c)(1); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

3919. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of D.C. ACT 17-134, "Closing of a Portion of 8th Street, S.E., and the Public Alley in Squares 5956 and W-5956, S.O. 05-4555, Act of 2007," pursuant to D.C. Code section 1-233(c)(1); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

3920. A letter from the Associate Special Counsel for Legal Counsel and Policy, Office of Special Counsel, transmitting the Office's final rule — Privacy Act of 1974; Implementation — received October 10, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

3921. A letter from the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, Department of Defense, transmitting a report on a navigation improvement project for Haines, Alaska; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

3922. A letter from the Director, Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's review of the Chief of Engineers' proposed report on the Lower Colorado River Basin, Phase I, Texas; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

3923. A letter from the Director of Regulations Management Office of Regulation Policy & Management, VA, Department of Veterans Affairs, transmitting the Department's final rule — Government-Furnished Headstone and Marker Regulations (RIN: 2900-AM64) received September 18, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

3924. A letter from the Director of Regulations Management, Department of Veterans Affairs, transmitting the Department's final rule — Accreditation of Service Organization Representatives and Agents (RIN: 2900-AM29) received October 10, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.