

The GAO is instructed to report on implementation of program changes 1 year after the first 5-year contract period following enactment of this legislation. The adequacy of funding allocated to the QIOs for local initiatives has been in dispute among the QIOs. Congress is to receive an independent report about the adequacy of QIO financing before the initiation of each contract period.

The contracting process is strengthened by mandating timely contracting with the QIOs by CMS and by lengthening the contract period from 3 to 5 years. All QIOs must bid competitively every 5 years.

Fifth, local boards have been physician-dominated with little consumer representation. Our bill eliminates the requirement that QIOs must be physician sponsored organizations. Our bill improves local QIO accountability by strengthening the authority of the Secretary over board structure and function. It authorizes the Secretary to ensure that non-physician quality experts and qualified consumers are given appropriate representation on state QIO boards. It authorizes the Secretary to ensure that the board structure is appropriate, that the compensation of board members and executives is market-based and that conflict of interest among board members is mitigated.

Sixth, as the QIOs focus more of their energies on working with providers to improve quality the demand for their services in this endeavor exceed their resources. For example, the number of doctors requesting help from the Utah QIO in selecting information technology for their offices far exceeds the resources available to it from its CMS contract.

Our bill allows a QIO to contract with a provider or organization if it meets one of several requirements. Among them are that the QIO must receive no more than 5 percent of its revenue from a single provider or organization, or if the contracting organization is subject to review by the QIO, conflict of interest must be mitigated by using an out-of-state QIO to perform the reviews that the local QIO would otherwise perform.

The QIO program differs from other Federal health care quality programs in that it does not just measure quality; it works with providers to attain it. The Medicare Quality Improvement Organization Act of 2007 strengthens the rights of beneficiaries, strengthens the administration of the program and the contracting process, provides for more accountability of contractors, and focuses the program on creating quality systems.

I urge my colleagues to join with me in strengthening the QIO program. It is one of the cornerstones of the quality initiative not just for Medicare but for all Americans.

By Mr. LEAHY (for himself, Mr. COCHRAN, and Mr. DODD):

S.J. Res. 25. A joint resolution providing for the appointment of John W.

McCarter as a citizen regent of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the joint resolution be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the text of the joint resolution was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S.J. RES. 25

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That, in accordance with section 5581 of the Revised Statutes (20 U.S.C. 43), the vacancy on the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution, in the class other than Members of Congress, occurring because of the expiration of the term of Walter E. Massey of Georgia, is filled by the appointment of John W. McCarter of Illinois, for a term of 6 years, effective on the date of the enactment of this resolution.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 385—HONORING THOSE WHO HAVE VOLUNTEERED TO ASSIST IN THE CLEANUP OF THE NOVEMBER 7, 2007, OIL SPILL IN SAN FRANCISCO BAY

Mrs. BOXER (for herself and Mrs. FEINSTEIN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 385

Whereas the oil spill that occurred on November 7, 2007, in the San Francisco Bay resulted in the discharge of between 53,570 and 58,000 gallons of toxic bunker fuel, causing one of the Bay Area's worse environmental disasters;

Whereas 28 beaches were closed and over 1,300 birds so far have been severely impacted by the spill;

Whereas thousands of individuals throughout the San Francisco Bay Area immediately volunteered to assist with the cleanup;

Whereas Bay Area community non-profit organizations, such as San Francisco Connect, have also rallied to support the response and recovery work by supporting these volunteer efforts;

Whereas Bay Area environmental organizations, such as Baykeeper, Save the Bay, and Bay Institute, have provided invaluable leadership in reporting, assessing, and helping to remediate the damage to the Bay's ecosystem;

Whereas the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations, members of the San Francisco Crab Boat Owners Association, commercial crabbers, and other Bay Area fishermen have all joined the cleanup efforts as well; and

Whereas the city of San Francisco, particularly through its Department of Emergency Management, has significantly contributed to the overall response, bringing considerable resources to bear: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate honors those individuals and organizations who have volunteered to assist in the cleanup of the November 7, 2007, oil spill in one of our Nation's most beloved national treasures, the San Francisco Bay.

SENATE RESOLUTION 386—TO AUTHORIZE TESTIMONY AND LEGAL REPRESENTATION IN STATE OF NEBRASKA V. PAMIR J. SAFI

Mr. REID (for himself and Mr. MCCONNELL) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 386

Whereas, in the case of State of Nebraska v. Pamir J. Safi, No. CR05-87, pending in Nebraska District Court for Lancaster County in Lincoln, Nebraska, testimony has been requested from Dorothy Anderson and Blayne Garth Glissman, Jr., former employees in the office of Senator Chuck Hagel;

Whereas, pursuant to sections 703(a) and 704(a)(2) of the Ethics in Government Act of 1978, 2 U.S.C. §§288b(a) and 288c(a)(2), the Senate may direct its counsel to represent employees of the Senate with respect to any subpoena, order, or request for testimony relating to their official responsibilities;

Whereas, by the privileges of the Senate of the United States and Rule XI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, no evidence under the control or in the possession of the Senate may, by the judicial or administrative process, be taken from such control or possession but by permission of the Senate;

Whereas, when it appears that evidence under the control or in the possession of the Senate may promote the administration of justice, the Senate will take such action as will promote the ends of justice consistent with the privileges of the Senate: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved That Dorothy Anderson and Blayne Garth Glissman, Jr. are authorized to testify in the case of State of Nebraska v. Pamir J. Safi, except concerning matters for which a privilege should be asserted.

Sec. 2. The Senate Legal Counsel is authorized to represent Dorothy Anderson and Blayne Garth Glissman, Jr. in connection with the testimony authorized in section one of this resolution.

SENATE RESOLUTION 387—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE REGARDING THE DEGRADATION OF THE JORDAN RIVER AND THE DEAD SEA AND WELCOMING COOPERATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLES OF ISRAEL, JORDAN, AND THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

Mr. LUGAR (for himself and Mr. DURBIN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 387

Whereas the Dead Sea and the Jordan River are bodies of water of exceptional historic, religious, cultural, economic, and environmental importance for the Middle East and the world;

Whereas the world's 3 great monotheistic faiths—Christianity, Islam, and Judaism—consider the Jordan River a holy place;

Whereas local governments have diverted more than 90 percent of the Jordan's traditional 1,300,000,000 cubic meters of annual water flow in order to satisfy a growing demand for water in the arid region;

Whereas the Jordan River is the primary tributary of the Dead Sea and the dramatically reduced flow of the Jordan River has been the primary cause of a 20 meter fall in the Dead Sea's water level and a ½ decline in the Dead Sea's surface area in less than 50 years;

Whereas the Dead Sea's water level continues to fall about a meter a year;

Whereas the decline in water level of the Dead Sea has resulted in significant environmental damage, including loss of freshwater springs, river bed erosion, and over 1,000 sinkholes;

Whereas mismanagement has resulted in the dumping of sewage, fish pond runoff, and salt water into the Jordan River and has led to the pollution of the Jordan River with agricultural and industrial effluents;

Whereas the World Monuments Fund has listed the Jordan River as one of the world's 100 most endangered sites;

Whereas widespread consensus exists regarding the need to address the degradation of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea;

Whereas the Governments of Jordan and Israel, as well as the Palestinian Authority (the "Beneficiary Parties"), working together in an unusual and welcome spirit of cooperation, have attempted to address the Dead Sea water level crisis by articulating a shared vision of the Red Sea-Dead Sea Water Conveyance Concept;

Whereas Binyamin Ben Eliezar, the Minister of National Infrastructure of Israel, has said, "The Study is an excellent example for cooperation, peace, and conflict reduction. Hopefully it will become the first of many such cooperative endeavors";

Whereas Mohammed Mustafa, the Economic Advisor for the Palestinian Authority, has said, "This cooperation will bring wellbeing for the peoples of the region, particularly Palestine, Jordan, and Israel . . . We pray that this type of cooperation will be a positive experience to deepen the notion of dialogue to reach solutions on all other tracks";

Whereas Zafer al-Alem, the former Water Minister of Jordan, has said, "This project is a unique chance to deepen the meaning of peace in the region and work for the benefit of our peoples";

Whereas the Red Sea-Dead Sea Water Conveyance Concept envisions a 110-mile pipeline from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea that would descend approximately 1,300 feet creating an opportunity for hydroelectric power generation and desalination, as well as the restoration of the Dead Sea;

Whereas some have raised legitimate questions regarding the feasibility and environmental impact of the Red Sea-Dead Sea Water Conveyance Concept;

Whereas the Beneficiary Parties have asked the World Bank to oversee a feasibility study and an environmental and social assessment whose purpose is to conclusively answer these questions;

Whereas the Red Sea-Dead Sea Water Conveyance Concept would not address the degradation of the Jordan River;

Whereas the Beneficiary Parties could address the degradation of the Jordan River by designing a comprehensive strategy that includes tangible steps related to water conservation, desalination, and the management of sewage and agricultural and industrial effluents; and

Whereas Israel and the Palestinian Authority are expected to hold high-level meetings in the Washington area in the winter of 2007 to seek an enduring solution to the Arab-Israeli crisis: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) calls the world's attention to the serious and potentially irreversible degradation of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea;

(2) applauds the cooperative manner with which the Governments of Israel and Jordan, as well as the Palestinian Authority (the "Beneficiary Parties"), have worked to address the declining water level and quality of the Dead Sea and other water-related challenges in the region;

(3) supports the Beneficiary Parties' efforts to assess the environmental, social, health, and economic impacts, costs, and feasibility of the Red Sea-Dead Sea Water Conveyance Concept in comparison to alternative proposals, such as those that focus on the restoration of the Jordan River;

(4) encourages the Governments of Israel and Jordan, as well as the Palestinian Authority, to continue to work in a spirit of cooperation as they address the region's serious water challenges;

(5) urges Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority to develop a comprehensive strategy to rectify the degradation of the Jordan River; and

(6) hopes the spirit of cooperation manifested by the Beneficiary Parties in their search for a solution to the Dead Sea water crisis might serve as a model for addressing the degradation of the Jordan River, as well as a model of peace and cooperation for the upcoming meetings in the Washington area between Israel and the Palestinian Authority as they seek to resolve long-standing disagreements and to develop a durable solution to the Arab-Israeli crisis.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 53—CONDEMNING THE KIDNAPPING AND HOSTAGE-TAKING OF 3 UNITED STATES CITIZENS FOR OVER 4 YEARS BY THE REVOLUTIONARY ARMED FORCES OF COLOMBIA (FARC), AND DEMANDING THEIR IMMEDIATE AND UNCONDITIONAL RELEASE

Mr. NELSON of Florida (for himself and Mr. ISAKSON) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. CON. RES. 53

Whereas the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) is designated as a foreign terrorist organization by the Department of State;

Whereas the FARC utilizes kidnappings for ransom, extortion, and the drug trade to finance its activities;

Whereas the FARC has consistently committed atrocities against citizens of both Colombia and the United States, kidnapped at least 36 United States citizens since 1980, and killed 10 United States citizens;

Whereas an aircraft carrying United States citizens crashed over territory controlled by the FARC on February 13, 2003;

Whereas Keith Stansell, Thomas Howes, and Marc Gonsalves, 3 United States citizens on the aircraft, were taken hostage by the FARC on February 13, 2003;

Whereas the FARC murdered Tom Janis, another United States citizen on the downed aircraft;

Whereas 3 United States citizens on a subsequent search mission also lost their lives;

Whereas the 3 hostages were last shown alive on July 25, 2003, during a taped interview with the CBS news show "60 Minutes";

Whereas a police officer from Colombia who escaped from the FARC in April 2007 claims he saw the 3 United States hostages alive in April 2007;

Whereas at least 50 FARC leaders have been indicted in the United States for drug trafficking; and

Whereas Ricardo Palmera, the most senior FARC leader to be tried in the United States, was convicted of conspiring to take the United States citizens hostage in Colombia: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That Congress—

(1) condemns the kidnappings of Keith Stansell, Thomas Howes, and Marc Gonsalves by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and calls for their immediate and unconditional release;

(2) condemns the FARC for holding these hostages for more than 4 years and demands to know their health and status;

(3) condemns the FARC for the murder of Tom Janis;

(4) condemns the FARC for its use of kidnapping for ransom, extortion, and drug trafficking and for supporting and spreading terror within Colombia;

(5) expresses sympathy to the relatives of the hostages who have been unsure of the fates of their family members for more than 4 years;

(6) reconfirms that the United States Government does not make concessions to terrorists; and

(7) reiterates that the United States Government supports efforts to secure the safe return of the hostages to the United States.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 54—SUPPORTING THE DESIGNATION OF A WEEK AS "NATIONAL CARDIOPULMONARY RESUSCITATION AND AUTOMATED EXTERNAL DEFIBRILLATOR AWARENESS WEEK"

Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. FEINGOLD, and Mr. DORGAN) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions:

S. CON. RES. 54

Whereas heart disease remains the leading cause of death in the United States;

Whereas heart disease affects men, women, and children of every age and race in the United States, regardless of where they live;

Whereas approximately 325,000 coronary heart disease deaths annually occur out of hospital or in an emergency room;

Whereas approximately 95 percent of sudden cardiac arrest victims die before arriving at the hospital;

Whereas sudden cardiac arrest results from an abnormal heart rhythm in most adults;

Whereas in 27.4 percent of cases of sudden cardiac arrest, the victim is located in a place other than a hospital and receives cardiopulmonary resuscitation by a bystander;

Whereas prompt delivery of cardiopulmonary resuscitation more than doubles the chance of survival from sudden cardiac arrest by helping to maintain vital blood flow to the heart and brain, increasing the amount of time that an electric shock from a defibrillator can be effective;

Whereas an automated external defibrillator, even when used by a bystander, is safe, easy to operate, and highly effective in restoring a normal heart rhythm, significantly increasing the chance of survival for many victims if used immediately after the onset of sudden cardiac arrest;

Whereas death or severe brain injury is likely to occur unless resuscitation measures are started no later than 10 minutes after the onset of sudden cardiac arrest;

Whereas the interval between the 911 call and the arrival of EMS personnel is typically longer than 5 minutes, and achieving high survival rates therefore depends on a public trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation and automated external defibrillator use; and

Whereas the American Heart Association, the American Red Cross, and the National