

keep our military's best interests in mind, particularly one that has a history of trying to sell weapons of military technology to unfriendly countries.

Mr. President, I ask for 2 additional minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator is recognized.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I have not received answers to those questions either. This is a critically important matter. What happens if France or Russia—which, by the way, is pushing to increase its stake in EADS—want to slow down our military capacity because they do not like our policies? Do we want another country to have that kind of control for decades to come—especially given the concerns the Defense Secretary has now raised about decisionmaking and leadership at the Air Force? I think we have to push for an explanation before we move forward on this contract.

I have detailed this morning three very serious concerns about Airbus and EADS. The facts are clear. When it comes to international trade, EADS doesn't play fair. It has repeatedly lied about its impact on our economy and it has more than once given us reason to worry about how hard it will work to protect our security interests.

The bidding process for the tanker contract was so flawed that Boeing filed its first ever protest of a defense contract decision with the GAO, and we are waiting for that decision. But we need to remember the GAO can only look at whether the Air Force followed the procurement laws and regulations. It cannot answer whether the Air Force should have awarded that contract in the first place. We, Congress, have to ask those questions.

I have raised those questions in hearings, in letters to Pentagon officials, and in face-to-face meetings, yet no one at the Air Force or the Pentagon or the White House has begun to justify why we should award a \$35 billion contract to supply the linchpin of our military strength to a company that another branch of our Government has accused of illegal business practices, one that distorts its records, and does not have our national security interests at heart.

As I said at the beginning of my remarks, the Defense Secretary has raised serious questions about the leadership and oversight at the Air Force. Given those concerns, we here in the Senate and the Congress must examine this contract carefully, demand the Air Force explain its decision, and consider whether it is in our Nation's best interests to move forward on this contract. We owe it to our taxpayers. We owe it to our servicemembers. I hope with new leadership and oversight at Air Force, we will get those answers.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Arkansas is recognized.

GAS PRICES

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I wish to follow up on something the two leaders were talking about a few minutes ago, and that is gas prices are a very serious issue in this country, certainly in my State. Everywhere I go in Arkansas, people ask me about it. I encourage all of our colleagues, Democrats and Republicans, House and Senate, let's all work together and try to do something. Certainly it is going to take a Herculean effort to get President Bush to change his policy on gas prices, but I hope we could all work together, find some consensus, and move forward on some meaningful legislation to try to bring relief to people today on gas prices.

HONORING COACH JOHN McDONNELL

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to talk about a great Arkansan, a fellow—I am holding his picture up here—whom most Americans do not recognize. Pretty much everybody in Arkansas knows him. He is a household name in our State.

It is with great pleasure I rise today to honor the career of a great Arkansan, a track and field icon, known not just in Arkansas but around the world. Following the NCAA Outdoor Track and Field Championships this week, Coach John McDonnell will retire after 36 years at The University of Arkansas.

Walking past the trophy cases lining Bud Walton Arena at the University of Arkansas, you will note the Razorback track team has been a winner over and over again under the leadership of Coach John McDonnell. He has accumulated more National Championships than any other coach in the history of college athletics. But his commitment to track and the UofA goes beyond the finish line. His athletes will tell you that Coach McDonnell motivated them and set high standards on and off the track. He taught them about integrity, character and teamwork—traits they continue to apply in their career and lives today.

Dr. B. Alan Sugg, president of the University of Arkansas system, said it best when he described Coach McDonnell as “a world-class coach because he is a world-class leader.”

He started his track career at Southwestern Louisiana, now Louisiana-Lafayette, where he was a six-time All-American in cross country and track. He also was the 1966-67 AAU 3,000-meter champion, and he won the mile at the 1966 British Selection Games.

He began helping other athletes achieve their own success as a coach for 2 years at New Providence, NJ and at Lafayette, LA before embarking on a dedicated and determined career coaching the Razorbacks. He accepted the job at Arkansas over a similar offer from Oklahoma, he says, because the terrain of northwest Arkansas reminded him of his home in Ireland.

I am going to hold up a sign here. When you drive into Fayetteville, you see this sign. It says, “Welcome to Fayetteville, Track Capital of the World; 42 NCAA Track and Field Championships.” You will notice this “42” is like a little flip chart because we won so many times, I think after maybe 25 or so, the highway department said we can't keep replacing this sign every time he wins a title, so now all they do is change that number out. Let me tell you, it changes frequently.

His record of wins as a coach is remarkable. He has won 42 NCAA National Championships since 1984: 11 in cross country, 19 indoor track championships, and 12 outdoor track championships. This includes 12 consecutive NCAA indoor track championships from 1984-1995. During this streak he won the triple crown five times including three in a row from 1991-1994.

He has been relentless in his pursuit of conference championships as well, winning 84 conference championships since 1974 including 38 in the old Southwest Conference and 46 in the Southeastern Conference. Did I mention 20 conference triple crowns since 1982, including 8 straight between 1987-1995?

Alberto Salazar, a Nike executive and world-class marathoner said “John McDonnell has been the most successful and the best coach in the United States from the 1980s on.” He goes on to say, “his teams have continued to get better and better . . . he has set the standard for all other coaches to follow.”

While being a winning coach he also focused on development of his student-athletes, coaching 185 track All-Americans who combined have earned 652 All-America honors. He has coached 23 Olympians, spanning three decades and six different Olympic Games. Mike Conley won a gold medal in Barcelona and a silver medal in Los Angeles, Matt Hemingway earned silver in Athens, and Calvin Davis a bronze in Atlanta.

Seven-time NCAA champion and Olympian Alistair Cragg said:

I am his creation . . . I came in here out of shape and had quit running. He's got that hand on your shoulder that you know you can't mess up, but if you do that you're not going to mess up on your own. You can go into any race or competition with a lot of confidence. When he says you're ready, you're ready. It's a reassurance.

Moreover, Coach McDonnell produced 55 individual national champions. His athletes hold 22 records, including Daniel Lincoln who holds the Outdoor American record for the 3,000M Steeplechase and Tyson Gay who holds the 200M record at the Outdoor World Championships.

Coach McDonnell will continue to inspire student-athletes and coaches alike. A physical legacy has been established by the new state of the art “John McDonnell Field”—a new 10,000 seat outdoor venue which opened in 2006 at the University of Arkansas. Accompanying that is the Randal Tyson

Track Center, a world-class indoor facility that opened in 2001.

"John built this program," says Mike Conley, a five-time NCAA champion at Arkansas and the 1992 gold medal winner in the Olympic triple jump.

When he recruited me and the others who eventually won the school's first national Triple Crown, there weren't any facilities to speak of. We came because we believed in him and what he thought he could do at Arkansas. The facilities came later because of his success.

With much humility and a sense of humor, Coach McDonnell has been named National Coach of the Year 12 times in indoor track, 11 times in outdoor track and 7 times in cross country.

That is a total of 30 National Coach of the Year honors. I do not want to forget about the 50 times he has been named Conference Coach of the Year, and the 62 times he was awarded Region Coach. The most recent award was winning the 2008 SEC Coach of the Year for outdoor track.

It goes without saying Coach McDonnell has been inducted into the U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Hall of Fame, the University of Arkansas Sports Hall of Honor, the Arkansas Sports Hall of Fame, the University of Southwestern Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame, and the Mayo Hall of Fame.

Coaches and teachers live within our hearts and our minds for years. We remember their drills, their training and their sayings and only later realize the full impact they have had on our lives. Coach McDonnell is one of those coaches.

I ask my colleagues to join me today in thanking and recognizing Coach John McDonnell on his outstanding career and his positive influence for so many Razorback athletes.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. NELSON of Nebraska). The Senator from Montana.

MEDICARE IMPROVEMENTS FOR PATIENTS AND PROVIDERS ACT

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, today I rise to urge passage of S. 3101, the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act.

This is the right bill for America's seniors and the health care providers who treat them. It is a balanced bill, and it enjoys strong bipartisan support.

It hasn't been easy to get to this point. I have engaged in earnest negotiations with Senator GRASSLEY, Minority Leader MCCONNELL, and the administration to reach a compromise on this bill.

After several weeks of talks, it became clear that we would not be able to reach agreement on a bill that is fair to both rural and urban areas, and that balances the need to help America's seniors with the need to address

the pending payment cut for Medicare providers.

So I have worked with Democrats and willing Republicans to craft this legislation, the right legislation, and I urge all Senators to enthusiastically support it.

There is urgency in this call for support. We must act now to block the cuts that Medicare's doctors will face on July 1.

This legislation gives doctors a decent, measured increase in reimbursement that doesn't explode costs or excessively raise premiums.

It includes provisions to improve the quality of care that is provided and, as is so urgently needed, increases access to primary care.

It will also save lives and reduce costs by requiring doctors to use e-prescribing by 2011 whenever they give Medicare patients prescriptions.

But the legislation goes further. It also takes care of America's seniors.

First, it expands access to preventive services. Preventive care can identify health problems before they become health catastrophes.

To help beneficiaries identify medical conditions and risk factors early, this bill allows new preventive services to be added to the program, so long as they are recommended by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force and are approved through regular regulatory channels.

Second, the bill finally gets rid of the discriminatory copayment rates for seniors with mental illnesses.

Many older Americans experience depression and other mental health problems, but Medicare currently requires a much higher copayment for mental health services.

That copayment is 50 percent, compared to the 20 percent required for physical health care services.

This legislation lowers copayments for seniors' mental health services until they match other copays, making sure that seniors can afford the screening and treatment they need.

The bill also expands the drug benefit's coverage to include benzodiazepines and barbiturates used for epilepsy and mental health treatment.

Third, for low-income seniors this act expands programs that help with their out-of-pocket costs. Medicare pays many health costs for seniors, but some low-income beneficiaries need extra help to afford even basic care.

And although subsidies are available through the Medicare Savings Programs, or MSPs, beneficiaries must prove their assets are low enough to qualify.

The assets test for these programs has not been raised since 1989—even though the cost of living, and certainly the cost of medical care, have increased astronomically since then.

The bill takes an important step to improve access for these beneficiaries by increasing the level of savings that MSP applicants may have and still qualify for help.

We also discount the value of life insurance policies and financial help from churches or family members from counting against a senior's eligibility for assistance.

Fourth, this bill protects seniors from unscrupulous marketing practices by private health plans.

Countless reports have surfaced about aggressive, fraudulent and even abusive sales and marketing practices used by Medicare Advantage plans, the private plan option in Medicare.

This legislation builds on the CMS-proposed rule to ban abusive marketing of Medicare Advantage and other plans once and for all. Marketing abuses are extensive. This legislation stops that.

The Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act takes important steps to shore up our health care system in rural areas.

It ensures that hospitals in these areas get the resources they need to keep their doors open, and expands access to tele-health services.

It also includes important relief for ambulance providers and physicians serving rural areas.

Pharmacy payments are another area where the legislation makes important improvements.

Pharmacies are an integral part of the health care infrastructure in America.

Prescription drugs play a huge role in medical treatment, and many people see their pharmacists more regularly than their physicians.

Pharmacists are also vital to the ongoing success of the Part D prescription drug benefit.

Changes in this bill, including fairer and more timely payments to those who dispense drugs to our nation's senior citizens, can make the benefit work better for pharmacists, and thereby for seniors.

Furthermore, this act would save valuable Medicare dollars by providing one, fully bundled payment for all end-stage renal disease-related services.

This will improve the quality of care these vulnerable beneficiaries receive by balancing incentives and instituting a rigorous quality improvement program.

And, for the first time, dialysis facilities will receive a permanent, market-based update to their payments each year, to make sure that Medicare payments keep up with their costs.

One of the questions I am asked most about is how this bill would address Medicare Advantage payments.

Federal spending for private Medicare Advantage, MA, benefit plans, including health maintenance organizations, preferred provider organizations, and private fee-for-service plans, has grown rapidly since Congress increased payments for MA in the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003.

CBO tells us that the Federal Government will pay these private plans \$74 billion in 2008, at a rate 13 percent higher than traditional Medicare fee-for-service providers receive.